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ABSTRACT

The GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives program serves a cohort of approximately 3,369 seventh graders from 10 Austin Independent School District (AISD) middle schools and 28 seventh graders from the Texas Empowerment Academy charter school. More than half of these students come from low-income households, and many are considered at risk. This partnership of the AISD, higher education institutions, businesses, and community organizations focuses on support services designed to increase students achievement and prepare them to enroll in postsecondary institutions on graduation. GEAR UP has experienced some of the familiar successes and challenges of new programs. This first annual performance report provides information on the status of program implementation and serves as an assessment of the extent to which project objectives have been achieved. It also documents outcomes for cohort students. Evaluation findings are consistently positive for the program. Project participants indicated positive perceptions of the GEAR UP project. The project provided students with a reliable source of academic support, with approximately 1,700 students receiving tutoring and 400 attending GEAP UP summer camps. The guidance and counseling component has encouraged students to begin thinking and planning for college. The professional development component provided learning opportunities for teachers, 127 of whom completed Professional Development Academy courses. More than 900 parents attended campus Kick-Off conferences, and 1,098 parents completed a parent needs assessment. Project partners demonstrated their commitment to the project through the donation of their expertise and resources totaling $1,131,366. Recommendations are made for project continuation and improvement. Thirteen appendixes contain information about project participants and supporting organizations. (Contains 8 tables and 13 figures.) (SLD)

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GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project

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GEAR UP AUSTIN: IMPACTING LIVES PROJECT

2000-2001 Evaluation

Austin Independent School District

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

To many in Austin, Texas, the mention of the *GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project* initially brings about images of academic tutoring, campus GEAR UP Kick-Off conferences, college visits, academic course planning, career exploration days, job shadowing, parent training sessions, home visits, and teacher training. On the surface, it may simply appear to be a hectic schedule of activities for a variety of audiences. But what lies beneath is actually a concentrated reform initiative geared towards preparing young students, many of whom experience the debilitating effects of poverty, with intense support to have high expectations, stay in school, and complete the courses required to enter college.

The *GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project* serves a cohort of approximately 3,369 seventh-grade students from ten Austin Independent School District middle schools and 28 seventh-grade students from the Texas Empowerment Academy charter school. More than 50% of these students come from low-income households and many are considered at-risk. This partnership between the Austin Independent School District, higher education institutions, businesses, and community organizations focus on support services designed to increase students' academic achievement and prepare them to enroll in post-secondary institutions upon graduation.

GEAR UP has experienced some of the familiar successes and challenges that many new programs encounter. A five-month planning phase began in September. During this time, concerted effort was put into staffing, planning, budgeting, and training. Implementation of student and family services began in January 2001. Challenges have been presented along the way, but the staff have made the necessary adjustments to carry out project plans without deviating from the scope of the grant. Project staff, campus personnel, parents, and most importantly, the students themselves are already sharing accounts of successes small and large. Overall, a climate of concern and excitement for making a real difference in the lives of kids is growing.

The purpose of this first annual performance report is to provide information on the status of project implementation, to serve as an assessment of the extent to which project objectives have been achieved, and to document outcomes for the cohort students. This report will serve primarily to provide baseline indicators for the evaluation of the project through the course of the five project years. Multiple types of data sources were used to determine the status of project implementation and outcomes for GEAR UP cohort students. This report will be used to support subsequent project implementation and modification decisions.

Summary of Findings

The results of this evaluation were constantly positive for the newly developed *GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project*. A large amount of quality work was completed within a relatively short time frame. The analysis of data showed that:

- Project participants have positive perceptions of the GEAR UP project.
- The GEAR UP project has provided students with a reliable source of academic support with approximately 1,700 students receiving tutoring and 400 students attending GEAR UP summer camps.
- The guidance and counseling component of the project has encouraged students to begin thinking and planning for their futures with 2,670 GEAR UP students visiting college campuses, 839 participating in job-shadowing experiences, and all students participating in a comprehensive career education program.
- GEAR UP professional development component provided learning opportunities for all GEAR UP cohort teachers. Of those teachers, 127 completed in Professional Development Academy courses and $79,674.00 was spent supporting additional professional development opportunities.
- GEAR UP staff have increased communication with parents and begun to explore parent support needs. Over 900 parents attended campus Kick-Off conferences and1098 parents completed a parent needs assessment.
- Project partners have demonstrated their commitment to the project through the donation of their expertise and resources totaling $1,131,366.00.

Recommendations

While the project is well on the way to providing students and their families with substantial support, there are recommendations made in order to support the continued progress of the project. GEAR UP project staff should:

- Use the most current student academic achievement information to develop procedures for tracking the academic progress of a highly mobile student population and implement effective program services.
- Increase the use of small groups or one-on-one tutoring services.
- Increase the numbers of GEAR UP cohort students enrolled in advanced placement courses and provide intensive academic support for those students.
- Provide job-shadowing for all students.
- Continue the assessment of GEAR UP teacher professional development needs.
- Provide additional and ongoing GEAR UP sponsored professional development directly aligned with project goals and objectives.
- Continue to assess parent learning needs and offer expanded parent involvement opportunities.
- Continue to measure student progress, establish benchmarks, and adjust project services accordingly.

PREFACE

There are several important reasons to evaluate the GEAR UP program. Some of these follow:

- To provide grant decision-makers the necessary information to plan and implement the project.
- To provide information to grant decision-makers and other project stakeholders on aspects of the project that work effectively and areas for improvement.
- To determine what impact the program is having on its participants.

Overall, the evaluation information will help project management/staff, project partners, and school administrators understand how the program is working and enable them to make informed decisions leading to positive outcomes for all persons participating in the GEAR UP program.

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INTRODUCTION

GEAR UP Project Context

Since the 1960s, student achievement has been of concern for many in the United States. Nationwide, educators have worked diligently to implement many reform initiatives in the hope of closing the achievement gap between various ethnic and socio-economic student populations. Yet the challenge remains, with many of these students failing to meet minimal academic standards, to graduate from high school, and to enroll in college.

While the educational future for low socio-economic and minority students appears rather grim, it does not have to continue on that path. Steps can be taken to make sure that all students, regardless of their socio-economic status or ethnicity, are successful in academic coursework, complete the necessary steps to qualify for college admission, and enroll in post-secondary institutions. This is the premise for the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), a nationally funded initiative that encourages young, low income, at-risk students to have high expectations, stay in school, and complete the required courses to enter college. This national initiative is an outcome of President Clinton's *High Hopes for College* proposal encouraging partnerships between higher education institutions and public schools to raise expectations and ensure that all students are well prepared for college.

GEAR UP awards multi-year grants to locally designed partnerships between schools serving low income, at-risk students, colleges, businesses, and community organizations. The goal of these partnerships is to increase the enrollment of at-risk students in post-secondary institutions. The partnerships must

- start with a 7th grade cohort of students and continue provision of comprehensive support services through high school;
- inform students and parents about college opportunities and financial aid, providing students with a 21st Century Scholar Certificate, an early notification of financial aid eligibility; and
- promote rigorous academic coursework.

For additional information about the national GEAR UP initiative, refer to Appendix A.

Like many school districts around the country, the Austin Independent School District (AISD) is committed to encouraging at-risk students to have high expectations, stay in school, and complete the required courses to enter college. While experiencing some success, AISD has remained less than satisfied with the continued disparity in academic performance between student subgroups and has made a concerted effort to clearly articulate plans for increasing student academic achievement, reducing the dropout rate, supporting teachers, and creating community partnerships. The district has:

- implemented the Principles of Learning (POL) which promote the use of clearly articulated learning expectations based on the high standards set by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS);

- established IMPACT teams on each campus to provide individualized student case management for at-risk students;
- created a community task force to assist in reducing the number of dropouts;
- developed the *Bridges to Ninth Grade Success* program which offers extended learning time for students, additional opportunities to earn course credit, and individualized, ongoing assessment and monitoring.;
- continued to support the DELTA program, which provides at-risk students with an alternative way to complete their high school course requirements towards graduation; and
- institutionalized the *Advancement Via Individual Determination* (AVID) program, which provides classroom instruction featuring explicit instruction in skills, such as note taking, assignment tracking, and college-level writing and tutorial support, needed for success in advanced classes.

These initiatives have begun to create a network of services focused on meeting academic student needs; however there is still a need for intensive support services to prepare students for success beyond the K-12 system.

GEAR UP Project Description

The funding and development of the *GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project* compliments existing district initiatives, yet provides unique support for making sure that students "don't fall through the cracks". This partnership between the Austin Independent School District, Texas Empowerment Academy, higher education institutions, businesses, and community organizations has focused on building a sustainable and collaborative network of services to support students and their families in a holistic way. This support will not only enable students to graduate from high school but seeks to provide them with the necessary prerequisites and information to become enrolled in a postsecondary institution upon graduation from high school.

The *GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project* was developed using a single-cohort model. Students enrolled in the 7th grade at identified GEAR UP campuses during the 2000-2001 school year constitute the GEAR UP cohort. For the next five years, all project services will be designed to meet the needs of these students. However, services and resources originally intended for the cohort will also benefit other students attending GEAR UP schools. For example, students from other grade levels may utilize the College and Career Centers and instructional resources provided for GEAR UP campuses. Capacity for sustained services is built on each campus through teacher professional development, community partnership building, and parent training.

Using Fall 2000 PEIMS data, a cohort of approximately 3,369 seventh-grade students from ten Austin Independent School District middle schools and the Texas Empowerment Academy charter school was identified. More than 50% of these students come from low-income households and often meet state at-risk criteria. A summary of cohort demographic information for each GEAR UP campus is provided in Appendix B.

The *GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project* is divided into four components for project implementation and evaluation purposes.

- The ***academic intervention component*** is focused on developing and implementing intensive academic support services designed to support student preparation for the TAAS and TAKS tests and improve academic performance in the classroom. Interventions primarily consist of mentoring/tutoring services and a variety of summer camp experiences for GEAR UP students. GEAR UP also provides funds for classroom instructional materials and special learning opportunities.

- The ***enhanced guidance and counseling component*** provides support services focused on developing student awareness of various college and career opportunities and the processes involved in preparing to take advantage of those opportunities. Throughout the project, students will engage in the Individual Academic Career Plan (IACP) process, an intensive series of academic and career planning activities. Also, students will participate in college visits, career exploration days, and job shadowing events.

- The ***professional development component*** identifies, develops, and implements professional development opportunities for staff working with the GEAR UP cohort. The professional development emphasizes improving student achievement in the classroom and on the TAAS/TAKS tests. Additionally, GEAR UP supports professional development activities as it provides funds for substitutes, stipends, and/or registration fees to attend professional development sessions focused on core curriculum and test preparation skills.

- The ***parental involvement component*** of the project provides information and services that are focused on increasing college preparation awareness, assisting families to apply for college financial aid, and developing parenting skills to cohort parents. Within this project component, intensive efforts are made to provide information, materials, and services in a dual language format to meet the needs of all parents.

After funding notification, the project manager began immediately to recruit and hire project staff. By January 2001, 23 staff members were on board. While there was some staff turnover in the first year, primarily in the Parent Involvement Representative position, the project has remained fully staffed. To provide a variety of role models for a diverse student population, the *GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project* currently employs twenty-six ethnically diverse staff members, 5 of whom are male. The following table describes the ethnic distribution of the project staff.

Table 1: GEAR UP Project Staff Summary, August 2001

	African American	Hispanic	White
Project Administration (including the director, administrative assistant, and evaluation analyst)	0	1	2
Project Facilitators	5	3	3
Parent Support Specialists	4	6	0
Technology Specialists	0	1	1
TOTAL	9	11	6

Source: GEAR UP staffing records, 2000-2001.

The GEAR UP project staff have a variety of responsibilities. Descriptions of those responsibilities follow.

- The ***Project Director*** oversees the daily project operations including planning, administering services, collaborating with staff, and managing the project budget.
- The ***Evaluation Analyst*** provides formative and summative information for project planning and evaluation, develops and implements evaluation collection, analyzes data, and writes formative and summative evaluation reports.
- The ***Project Facilitators*** work collaboratively with the Project Director to manage the GEAR UP program activities on their respective campuses according to the management plan and timelines.
- The ***Parent Support Specialists*** work to develop a relationship between the school and families of cohort students. The primary responsibility for the parent support specialist is to provide educational parent programs that communicate the importance of being involved in their child's education. Parent education programs may include information on effective parenting skills, academic planning, college financial aid, and career opportunities.
- Finally, the ***Technology Specialists*** are responsible for the effective utilization of technological resources. The technology specialist positions focus on two areas of technology utilization. One specialist is primarily responsible for installation and maintenance of hardware and software in the College Career Centers and website development and maintenance. The other technology specialist identifies, plans, and implements training and development sessions for students, project staff, teachers, and parents.

In the second year of the program, the ***GEAR UP Advisory Council*** will be established. The purpose of the council will be to

- help project management stay in touch with the concerns of the community;
- serve as a "think tank";
- assist project management to leverage community resources;

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- review project initiatives, such as, scholarship awards; and
- address sustainablility issues.

Project management is currently identifying members to participate in the council. Council members may include the project director, evaluation associate, parents, and project partners.

The GEAR UP Budget

Funding for the *GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project* began September 15, 2000. The project will be funded for a period of five years by the U.S. Department of Education under Section 404 in the Higher Education Amendments of 1998. During the first funding period from September 15, 2000 through September 14, 2001, the project was awarded $2,163,267. The budget contains several categories for expenditures. Under the personnel category, the GEAR UP budget covered all staff salaries. Funds were allocated within the budget to cover services contracted in order to implement the project. These contracted services primarily were with professional development providers and Communities In Schools (CIS) for student case management services. Instructional materials and resources were funded under the supplies and materials portion of the budget. Finally, the Miscellaneous/Travel category provided funds to cover the costs of student incentives and travel expenses. Table 2 provides a summary of expenditures for each budget category.

Table 2: GEAR UP Budget Summary, 2000-2001

Budget Category	Expenditure	Total
2000-2001 Budget Appropriation		**$ 2,163,267.00**
Personnel	$ 827,006.02	
Contracted Services	$ 146,915.25	
Supplies and Instructional Materials	$ 374,585.91	
Miscellaneous/ Travel	$ 100,819.64	
TOTAL Expenditure		**$1,449,326.82**
Roll Over to Year 2, 2001-2002	$ 713,940.18	

Source: GEAR UP budget records for Project Year, 2000-2001

In addition to the GEAR UP funds provided by federal funds, project partners have provided substantial contributions during the first project year. As described previously, the *GEAR UP Austin* partnership represents the Austin Independent School District, the Texas Empowerment Academy, five colleges/universities, community organizations, and area businesses. Refer to Appendix M for a complete listing of project partners. GEAR UP

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partners support the project in a variety of ways that include professional expertise, time, facilities, and materials. The following portion of this report describes partner contributions and steps that have been taken to build a capacity for sustained project services.

Summary of Contributions

This partnership project model is designed to encourage community organizations to develop relationships with the local schools to provide intensive academic support services for low-income students. It is expected that the project management will build capacity so that service can be sustained well beyond the end of federal funding. This capacity building requires that project partners, including the school district, match federal funds one-for-one. In-kind contributions may include providing the services of existing personnel for project planning and implementation, funding for student and teacher travel to and from project events, supplying equipment and supplies for project activities, and using institutional facilities to host project activities and events. The following table summarizes most project partner contributions for the first project year. Contribution calculations from project partners, Learning Systems and Premier Planners, were unavailable at the time of this report.

Table 3: Matching Funds Summary for GEAR UP Fiscal Year I, 2000-2001

GEAR UP Budget Category	Project Partner Name	Partner Contribution Amount	District Contribution Amount
Personnel	AISD		$306,260
	ACC	$4,860	
	CIS	$135,300	
	Huston Tillotson	$13,966	
	JR Achievement	$41,559	
	St. Edward's	$14,260	
	Southwest Texas	$36,900	
	UT Austin	$12,600	
	Girlstart	$18,612	
Travel	Career Resources Development	$50	
	Huston Tillotson	$600	
	St. Edward's	$250	
	Southwest Texas	$1,250	
	UT Austin	$400	
Equipment	CIS	$2,000	
	GACC/PIE	$25,975	

Source: GEAR UP Budget records for Project Year, 2000-2001

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Table 3 continued: Matching Funds Summary for GEAR UP Fiscal Year I, 2000-2001

GEAR UP Budget Category	Project Partner Name	Partner Contribution Amount	District Contribution Amount
Materials	UT Austin	$500	
	Jr. Achievement	$68,910	
	Career Resources Development	$523	
	CIS	$2,000	
	Girlstart	$2,250	
	St. Edward's	$3,000	
	ACC	$900	
	Huston Tillotson	$750	
	Southwest Texas	$500	
	College Board	$734	
Contractual	Huston Tillotson	$1,250	
	Career Resources Development	$2,000	
	UT Austin	$2,500	
	DAAMARS	$2,300	
Other	AISD		$351,529
	Jr. Achievement	$15,000	
	St. Edward's	$1,401	
	Huston Tillotson	$1,385	
	Southwest Texas	$3,092	
	UT Austin	$6,000	
Scholarship Trust	AISD		$50,000
Subtotal		$423,577	$707,789
TOTAL	$1, 131,366		

Source: GEAR UP Budget records for Project Year, 2000-2001

GEAR UP partnership contributions extended beyond the donations of financial resources. Partners contributed innovative ideas used to develop student and parent services. These ideas proved to be instrumental in the design and implementation of student and parent services. The specific contributions will be discussed in the following sections of the report.

New Partnership Development

The *GEAR UP Austin* project director has continued to recruit committed community partners focused on accelerating student academic achievement and preparing students for college. Ten area businesses have made a commitment to students participating in the *GEAR UP Austin Impacting Lives Project* by providing funds for

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college financial aid. These corporate partners are: Southern Union Gas, URS Radian, 3M, HEB, Applied Materials, Coca-Cola, Locke Liddell & Sapp, Austin Energy, Solectron, and Faulkner Construction Company. These businesses have contributed $250,000 to the GEAR UP Scholarship Fund to support cohort students who are PELL grant eligible, graduate from high school, and enrolled in college.

Later in the first project year, GirlStart was added as new partner. As described previously, they provided scholarships for 17 girls to attend GirlStart camps during Summer 2001. For Project Year Two, GirlStart will provide training for project facilitators and one teacher from each GEAR UP campus, so that GEAR UP campuses can implement after-school GirlStart clubs designed to promote academic achievement in the areas of science and math. They will continue to provide scholarships for mini-camp and summer camp opportunities throughout the project year for GEAR UP girls.

Finally, Premier Planners: A Franklin Covey Corporation became a GEAR UP Project partner. Premier will provide training designed to help GEAR UP teachers and students use student planners effectively and over a sustained period of time. This training is available to a few selected schools from all over the nation. Additionally, Premier will provide a free, one-day, interactive workshop that challenges current educational paradigms, helping teachers advance those things that matter most.

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METHODOLOGY

Purpose

To reach project goals, the GEAR UP project has established specific project objectives. The implementation of project activities and evaluation of outcomes are guided by these project objectives. A complete list of objectives for each project component is provided in Appendix C. To meet the goals and objectives of the GEAR UP project, continuous measurement of student progress and impact of services must take place.

The purpose of this first annual performance report is to provide information on the status of project implementation and serve as an assessment of the extent to which project objectives have been achieved. Because this annual performance report was required just after the first semester of project implementation, it will serve primarily as a baseline data source for the continuing evaluation of the project services and participant outcomes through the course of the next five years.

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation focused on answering two broad questions:

1. For each project component, what program services were developed and implemented throughout the course of the GEAR UP Project?

2. For each project component, what are the project outcomes and impacts on the GEAR UP participants?

Data Collection

The GEAR UP Project evaluation used data from multiple quantitative and qualitative sources to inform project management and others about the program implementation and outcomes. A detailed description of data collection activities follows.

- ***Student Enrollment and Achievement Data*:** Student enrollment and achievement data were used to assess the needs and will be used in the future to assess subsequent progress of the GEAR UP cohort. TAAS scores, numbers of students enrolled in advanced placement courses, and report card grades were used to establish a baseline of student performance during the first year. To further establish a context, the GEAR UP cohort baseline data is compared with non-GEAR UP campus student data.

- ***GEAR UP Student Surveys*:** Cohort students completed a survey adapted from a GEAR UP survey provided for project use by the Department of Education. The purpose of the survey was to identify student academic support, career counseling, and family involvement needs as they are related to GEAR UP project objectives. The survey was conducted at all GEAR UP campuses throughout February and

March 2001, with 2,488 of 3,369 (74%) students responding. Student survey questions and results are provided in Appendix C.

- ***GEAR UP Parent Surveys*:** Cohort parents completed a survey adapted from a GEAR UP survey provided for project use by the Department of Education. The purpose of the survey was to further identify student academic and/or personal needs and specific parental involvement needs as related to project objectives. During February and March 2001, 1098 parents (33%) completed this survey at parent meetings and individual conferences. Parent survey questions and results are provided in Appendix D.

- ***Mentor/Tutor Interviews*:** Project mentors/tutors participated in an interview to provide information concerning the implementation of mentoring services and perceived impacts on GEAR UP students. The interviews were scheduled at the end of the spring semester in order to allow the tutors plenty of time to work (3 months) within the project before offering their opinions. All tutors were contacted and asked to participate. However, only 10 of 60 staff (approximately17%) representing 5 of the 11 GEAR UP campuses were able to participate in an interview. These interviews covered implementation concerns and perceived outcomes for GEAR UP students in regards to the tutoring component of the project. The interviews followed a fairly structured format with specific questions that were asked of each interviewee. Probing questions were used to elicit additional clarification or details as necessary. The basic questioning framework is provided in Appendix E.

- ***Project Facilitator Interviews*:** At the end of the 2001 spring semester, all GEAR UP project facilitators participated in an interview providing detailed information about the process of implementing the GEAR UP project and how the project may impact the student cohort. These interviews covered a large range of project implementation concerns and perceived outcomes for GEAR UP participants. The interviews followed a fairly structured format with specific questions that were asked of each interviewee. Probing questions were used to elicit additional clarification or details as necessary. The basic questioning framework is provided in Appendix F.

- ***Professional Development Evaluation Surveys:*** The GEAR UP project and project partner, Learning Systems, sponsored a two-day intensive professional development training session to prepare teachers to conduct SAT/ACT test preparation camps. Teachers in attendance completed an evaluation of the session. A summary of survey results is provided in Appendix G.

- ***GEAR UP Camp Evaluation Surveys:*** GEAR UP sponsored SAT/ACT test preparation, technology, and science camps during the summer of 2001. Students attending the second session of the test preparation camp (84 of 133, or 63%)

completed camp evaluation surveys. Refer to Appendix H for a summary of results. Students attending the fourth session of the technology camp (6 of 12, or 50%) completed the evaluation survey for this camp. Refer to Appendix J for a summary of results. Girls attending Girlstart camp (16 of 17, or 94%) completed evaluation surveys as well. The results are summarized on page 23 of the report.

- ***Meeting and Activity Documentation.*** Throughout the project, documentation from GEAR UP meetings and activities was compiled. These data consist of quantitative and qualitative materials including field notes, meeting/activity agendas and descriptions, attendance logs, project service contact hours. This documentation was collected as events occurred and was used as support information for other primary data sources.

Data Analysis

This project evaluation used multiple data sources and analysis techniques to provide information concerning the implementation of project services and participant outcomes. Descriptive statistics were used to report baseline student enrollment and achievement information and the results from surveys and evaluation forms. GEAR UP student enrollment and achievement information was contrasted with non- GEAR UP student enrollment and achievement information to provide additional context for student academic outcomes. The qualitative data obtained from interviews, field notes, meeting/activity agendas and descriptions provided detailed information about the process of implementing GEAR UP and the outcomes of service implementation. Content analysis techniques were used to identify important details, themes, and patterns in the data. Patterns and/or themes emerging from the analysis were summarized to characterize the project implementation process and participant outcomes. Using this approach, a more informed and sophisticated understanding of the GEAR UP grant and how it impacts students can be provided.

EVALUATION RESULTS

This section of the report presents findings related to the project evaluation questions. Student achievement data, interviews, surveys, and other project documentation provided data were used to evaluate the academic intervention component of the project. The analysis of the data provided a descriptive account of program development and implementation of project services and initial outcomes. The results are organized according to each of the four project components.

Results: Academic Intervention Component

The purpose of the GEAR UP academic intervention component is to provide students with intensive academic support services. Students were able to participate in activities designed to improve their performance in the classroom, on the TAAS/TAKS tests, and on the SAT/ACT tests. Students are encouraged to take rigorous coursework and supplied with academic support services to those courses successfully. For a complete list of objectives pertaining to the component, refer to Appendix I.

Student Needs Assessment

To begin efforts to meet specific objectives for the academic intervention component of the project (Appendix I), the GEAR UP project staff reviewed AISD 1999-2000 TAAS scores. At the time, most of the 7th grade cohort students were 6th graders attending the middle schools now categorized as GEAR UP middle schools. Most cohort students currently attending Kealing Junior High school attended one of the following elementary feeder schools during their 6th grade year: Blackshear, Cambell, Lee, and Maplewood. Most cohort students currently attending Martin Junior High school attended one of the following elementary feeder schools during their 6th grade year: Metz, Allan, Allison, Brooke, Govalle, Ortega, Sanchez, and Zavala. TAAS passing percentages for campuses feeding into these junior high schools were weighted according to their enrollment and averaged to provide an overall passing percentage for the Kealing and Martin campuses.

The review of 1999-2000 TAAS tests revealed that GEAR UP cohort students generally had lower total passing percentages on the reading and math portions of the TAAS test than did approximately 2,380 students attending seven non-GEAR UP middle schools. The following figures illustrate this trend.

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Figure 1: Passing Percentages on TAAS Reading for Total Students Attending GEAR UP and Non-GEAR UP Campuses, 1999-2000 School Year

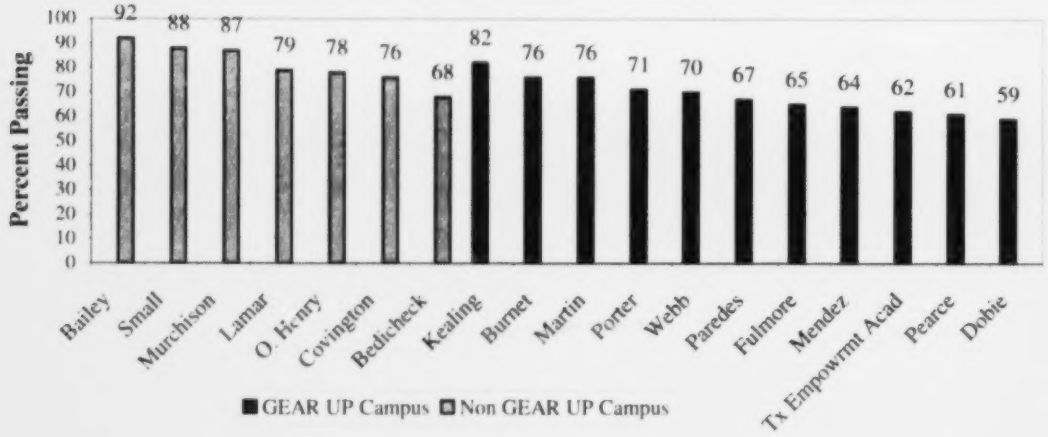
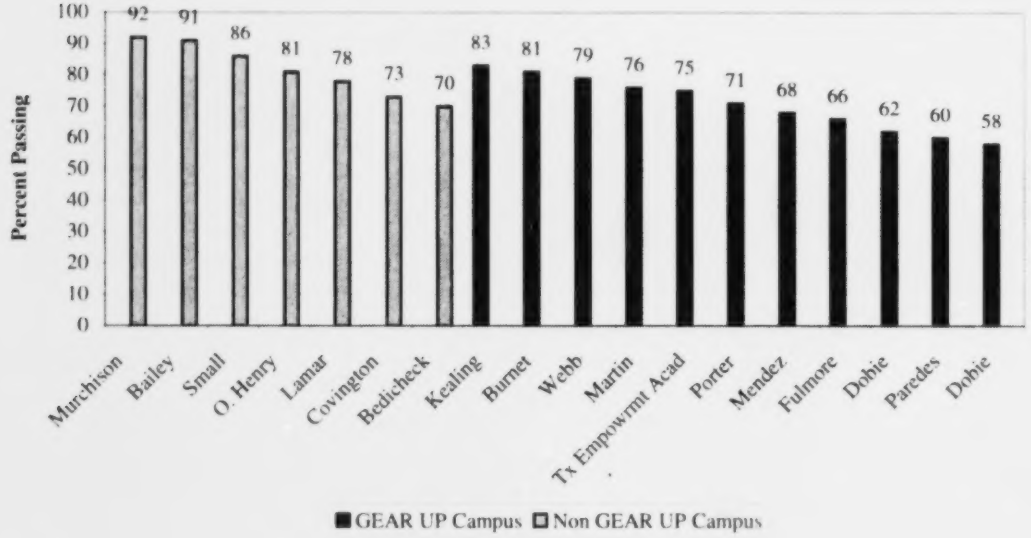


Figure 2: Passing Percentages on TAAS Math for Students Attending GEAR UP and Non-GEAR UP Campuses, 1999-2000 School Year



Additionally, the grade reports from the end of the 2000 Fall semester revealed that there were a larger percentage of GEAR UP students than non-GEAR UP students failing core curriculum courses. Table 4 provides a summary of student grades.

Table 4: Grade Report Summary for GEAR UP and Non-GEARUP Students, Fall 2000

	Below 70		70 - 80		Above 80	
	GEAR UP Students N=3369	**Non-GEAR UP Students N= 2380**	**GEAR UP Students N=3369**	**Non-GEAR UP Students N= 2380**	**GEAR UP Students N=3369**	**Non-GEAR UP Students N= 2380**
English/ Language Arts	419 (13%)	220 (10%)	1069 (33%)	595 (25%)	1789 (54%)	1529 (65%)
Mathematics	453 (14%)	230 (10%)	1133 (36%)	613 (27%)	1564 (50%)	1424 (63%)
Science	491 (16%)	245 (11%)	1084 (34%)	608 (26%)	1597 (50%)	1465 (63%)

Source: End of Fall semester report card grades (2000-2001) reported by AISD Management Information System and the Texas Empowerment Academy.

* # missing Language Arts grades for GEAR UP Students = 92, for Non-GEAR UP students = 36
* # missing Mathematics grades for GEAR UP Students = 219, for Non-GEAR UP students = 113
* # missing Science grades for GEAR UP Students = 197, for Non-GEAR UP students = 62

Academic Interventions

Driven by needs identified in the review of baseline data, GEAR UP project funds were allocated with the intention to directly support student learning. As reported previously, $374,585.91 was set aside to supply individual campus classrooms with much needed teaching materials and resources. Campuses were encouraged to order an assortment of resources that would directly support rigorous academic instruction throughout the course of the project year. These resources included textbooks, software, science lab equipment, math manipulatives, and other resource literature. Additionally, academically focused field trips were supported by GEAR UP funding.

In response to need indicated by 1999-2000 TAAS scores and mid-semester core curriculum grades, project management chose to begin providing intensive academic support for cohort students through mentoring/tutoring services. Beginning in January, each GEAR UP campus began designing a mentoring/tutoring program to provide increased academic support to GEAR UP students with failing grades or documented academic need. Later, tutoring services will also be provided to support students in advanced placement courses.

The University of Texas provided initial leadership in designing the GEAR UP mentoring/tutoring program. University staff worked with the GEAR UP project director to employ college work-study students as tutors. Not only did this contribution of planning time and available resources enable *GEAR UP Austin* divert project funds originally set aside to pay tutors to other necessary project expenditures, but it provided an avenue to sustain tutoring services long after the federal funding ends.

Over 60 work-study students were hired to provide tutoring services. The America Reads/America Counts Program provided 100% of the math tutors' salaries and 70% of the

reading tutors' salaries. Tutoring services followed a variety of formats including supplemental instruction within the classroom, small group instruction within and outside of the classroom, and one-on-one instruction. Tutoring services were offered within and after school hours.

As mentor/tutors were hired during the first project year, project stakeholders began to share ideas for creating a network to sustain tutoring efforts and possibly identify college students interested in a teaching career. The Gear Up project director began working with members of the UT Dana Center whose mission is to promote comprehensive school improvement and support school leadership. Together, they established a committee to explore the feasibility of creating a shared information system between the school district and the local higher education institutions that would enable work-study students to identify tutoring opportunities available in the school district.

The informal committee that began meeting last December to discuss putting into place a system for recruiting and training college students to be tutors under the America Reads, America Counts federal work-study program, met regularly all Spring semester. In August the collaboration worked together to orient, recruit, and hire tutors to meet the needs of a variety of educational programs. The committee will continue to explore and define appropriate training for tutors and create guidelines for the effective supervision of tutors. Their goal is to institutionalize the tutor recruitment and training system to sustain services after GEAR UP funding ends.

"I had outstanding tutors. They worked closely with the teachers to provide tutoring within the classroom. I think that the tutoring helped prepare the students for TAAS. Our TAAS math scores went way up."

-- A GEAR UP Facilitator

GEAR UP project objectives state that 100% of failing cohort students will receive mentoring/tutoring services each week (Objective IB, Appendix I). Students failing two or more core curriculum courses were initially identified for services. In addition to the students with failing reading and/or math grades, teachers and staff recommended approximately 500 other students in need of intensive academic support. As information became available throughout the semester, adjustments in services were made to serve all failing GEAR UP students. GEAR UP project service documents show that 1,701 students (50%) were served during the Spring 2001 semester.

Interviews with facilitators and mentor/tutors revealed that most GEAR UP students failing core courses were served during the semester; however they reported that not all students participated in tutoring weekly. In interviews, all project facilitators stated that they had difficulty in obtaining grade reports to identify failing students and to provide those students with tutoring services in a consistent or timely manner. Further, there were a number of missing student grades from the Student Grade Report records due to a variety of reasons, including simple reporting errors, student mobility issues, and coordination of grade reporting between regular and alternative education campuses. The lack of student grade information may have resulted in student loss of service.

Student identification issues aside, the interview data revealed that project facilitators highly valued the mentoring/tutoring services provided within the academic intervention component of the project. In the interviews, all of the campus project facilitators expressed their enthusiasm for the tutoring opportunities available to the students. Facilitators reported that the use of college students supplied campuses with a high quality tutoring staff that provided ongoing instructional support to meet individual student needs. Facilitators were proud of the initial success of the tutoring initiative as indicated by the numbers of students served and individual student success stories. They reported that mentors/tutors have helped communicate to students that the idea that *"succeeding in school is cool"*.

"GEAR UP has provided AWESOME tutors to provide academic assistance to students during the school day! These tutors were dedicated and showed initiative. They were assertive with students and worked diligently to help them."

--GEAR UP Facilitator

Interviews with tutors also indicated that GEAR UP tutoring services positively influenced student self-perception and motivation to learn. All of the tutors described how many of their students seemed to struggle with peer pressure concerning a variety of issues including schoolwork and social expectations. As the semester progressed, tutors working with small groups or one-on-one with students reported that the students began to identify their academic strengths and articulate their learning needs. Tutors also said that their students exhibited increasing self-confidence during the tutoring sessions throughout the semester. In addition, all tutors reported that their students began to express an interest in college and to ask questions about attending the University of Texas. These questions included a variety of topics, such as college living arrangements, extra-curricular activities, homework requirements, hours spent in class, class size, learning format, cost of classes and housing, and financial aid options.

While the project facilitators and mentor/tutors were enthusiastic about the tutoring services provided by the project, they made some specific suggestions for improvement. In their opinion, the GEAR UP tutoring program needs to:

- provide more "one-on one" tutoring experiences;
- increase the numbers of mentor/tutors in order to serve all students;
- offer training for mentor/tutors to develop behavior management skills and repertoire of teaching strategies; and
- supply appropriate instructional materials during tutoring including textbooks, computers, or manipulative materials.

Since GEAR UP tutoring was primarily focused on improving student academic skills in reading and math, TAAS scores and grade reports were reviewed again at the end of the Spring 2001 semester to provide additional baseline data for cohort performance and to begin documenting cohort academic achievement as they participate in the GEAR UP project. Compared to the previous year's performance, GEAR UP cohort students TAAS passing averages for the 2000-2001 school year were about the same. Notably, Burnet

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Middle School had a lower TAAS passing percentage with a drop of more than 10 percentage points in both reading and math for the 2000-2001 school year. Kealing Junior High includes students from the surrounding neighborhood and students coming from across the district enrolled in a magnet program. Each student group's TAAS scores are reported separately. Their 2000-2001 TAAS scores are compared with an overall TAAS passing percentage from the previous school year as the students were not participating in magnet programs. Figures 3 and 4 compare TAAS test passing percentages in reading and math for GEAR UP cohort students for school years 1999-2000 and 2000-2001.

Figure 3: TAAS Reading Results for GEAR UP Cohort, 1999-2000 & 2000-2001

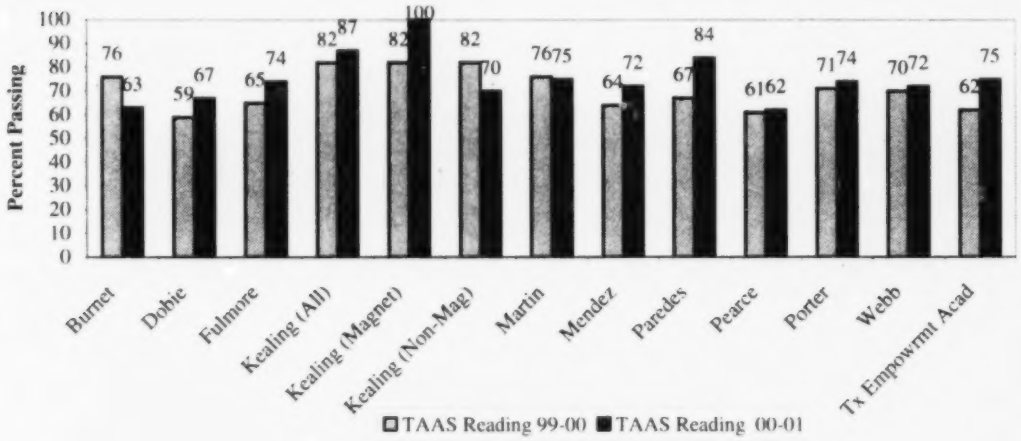
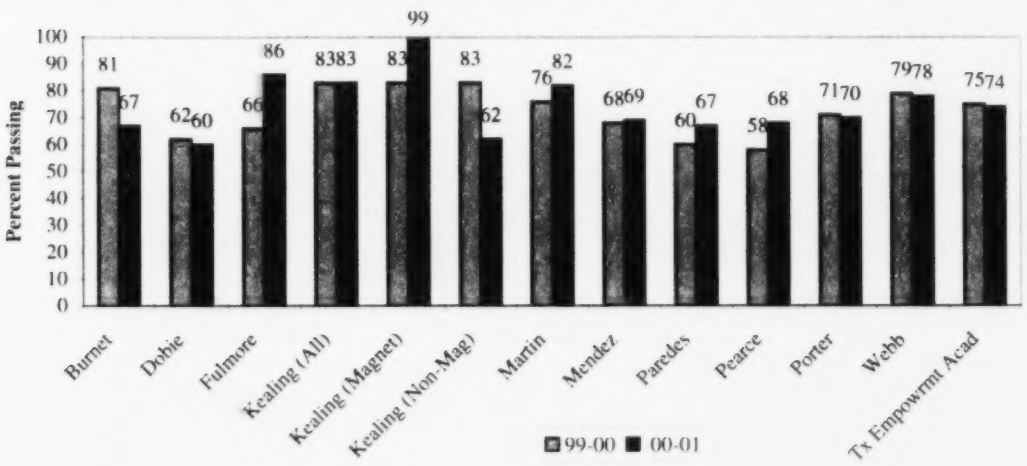
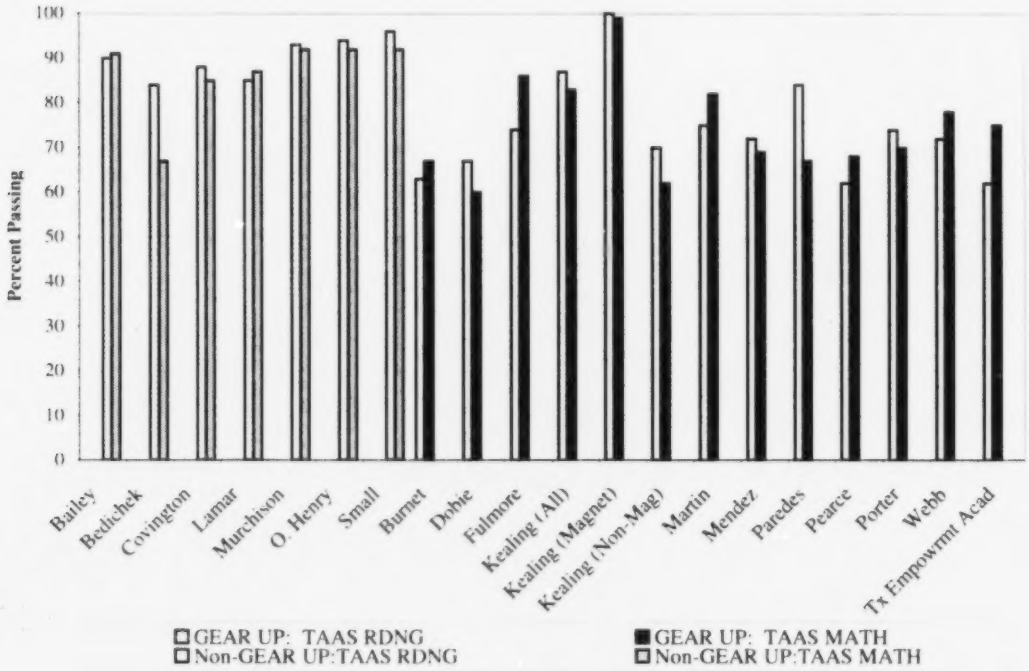


Figure 4: TAAS Math Results for GEAR UP Cohort, 1999-2000 and 2000-2001



Further, Spring 2001 TAAS test results showed that GEAR UP schools continued to have lower TAAS passing percentages for all students than did Non-GEAR UP schools. Figure 5 shows the 2001 TAAS passing percentages for all GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP students on both the reading and math tests.

Figure 5: Passing Percentages for GEAR UP And Non-GEAR UP Students on Reading and Math TAAS Tests, Spring 2001



Analysis of the Spring 2001 TAAS tests also showed gaps in achievement between the student subgroups at each GEAR UP campus. White students consistently outperformed their African American, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged peers at all GEAR UP campuses with the exception of Webb MS. At Webb, the passing percentage for Hispanic students was higher than for the other subgroups on the math portion of the TAAS. The number of students contained in each subgroup is provided in Appendix B. The following figures illustrate the differences in passing percentages on the reading and math portions of the TAAS test for the various GEAR UP student subgroups.

Figure 6: Passing Percentages on TAAS Reading for GEAR UP Student Subgroups, Spring 2001

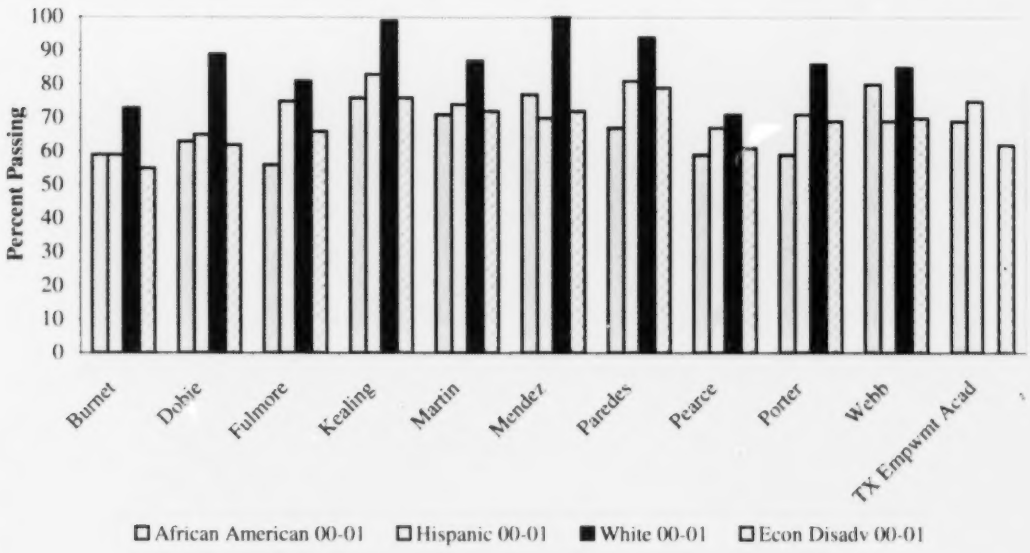
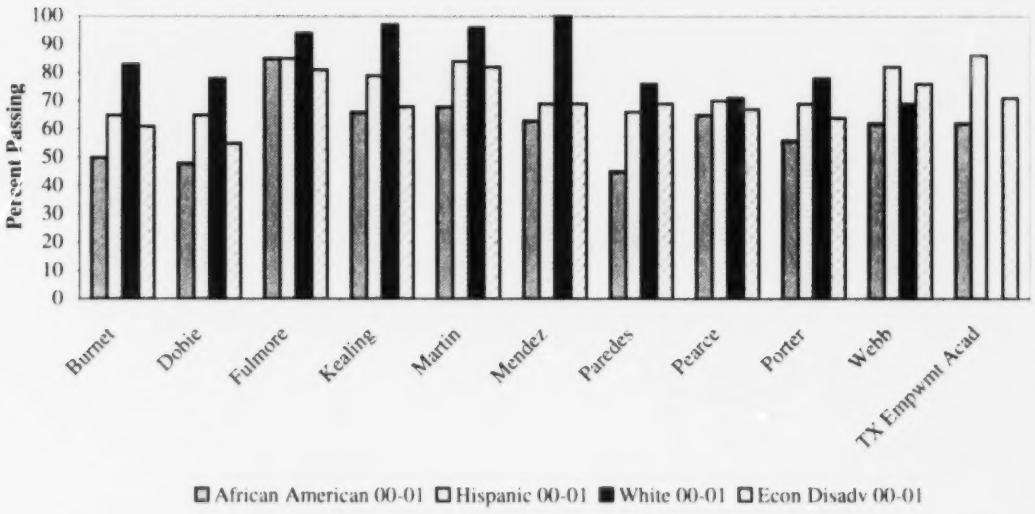


Figure 7: Passing Percentages on TAAS Math for GEAR UP Student Subgroups, Spring 2001.



At the end of the Spring 2001 semester, both GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP student grades continued to about the same as compared to their grades from the Fall semester. The following table compares the achievement of GEAR UP students and non-GEAR UP students as indicated by the end-of-semester grade reports.

Table 5: Student Grade Report Summary for GEAR UP and Non-GEAR UP Students, Spring 2001

	Below 70		70 – 80		Above 80	
	GEAR UP Students N=3369	**Non-GEAR UP Students N=2380**	**GEAR UP Students N=3369**	**Non-GEAR UP Students N=2380**	**GEAR UP Students N=3369**	**Non-GEAR UP Students N=2380**
English/ Language Arts	430 (13%)	232 (10%)	1071 (33%)	604 (25%)	1784 (54%)	1536 (65%)
Mathematics	459 (15%)	242 (11%)	1144 (36%)	617 (27%)	1555 (49%)	1436 (63%)
Science	496 (16%)	256 (11%)	1086 (34%)	611 (26%)	1595 (50%)	1475 (63%)

Source: End of Spring semester report card grades (May 2001) reported by AISD Management Information System and the Texas Empowerment Academy.

* # missing Language Arts grades for GEAR UP Students = 84, for Non-GEAR UP students = 8
* # missing Mathematics grades for GEAR UP Students = 211, for Non-GEAR UP students = 85
* # missing Science grades for GEAR UP Students = 192, for Non-GEAR UP students = 38

In the first months of project implementation, GEAR UP mentoring/tutoring services primarily served failing cohort students. However, tutoring services are also designed to support students as they are enrolled in advanced coursework. While, there are no 7th grade courses designated as "advanced placement" within AISD, there are 7th grade Honors, Gifted and Talented, and Pre-Advanced Placement courses that offer more rigorous academic study that begin to prepare students for advanced placement courses. Enrollment data show that a lower percentage of students attending GEAR UP schools were enrolled in more rigorous course options that would help prepare them for college. This enrollment data included those students taking magnet program coursework. Table 6 provides a summary of GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP students were enrolled in these more rigorous course options during the Spring 2001 semester.

Table 6: GEAR UP and Non-GEAR UP Advanced Course Enrollment, Spring 2001

	Advanced Mathematics	Advanced English/Language Arts	Advanced Science
GEAR UP Students	1094 (32%)	1027 (30%)	1017 (30%)
Non-GEAR UP Students	1214 (51%)	1251 (53%)	1233 (52%)

Source: Course enrollment for the 2000-2001 school year reported by AISD Management Information System and the Texas Empowerment Academy.

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In addition to the provision of mentoring/tutoring services, the GEAR UP project supported student academic growth through summer camp experiences. Using the GEAR UP College and Career Technology Centers, GEAR UP technology staff provided a series of four, one-week technology camp sessions. These camps were planned for small groups of students offering intensive, individualized instruction. The purpose of the technology camps was to develop computer and language arts skills as students created and presented unique power point presentations. Through the four weeks, 35 GEAR UP students participated in the technology camps. All students completing a course evaluation responded positively to the camp. A summary of their responses to the evaluation can be found in Appendix J.

"I really enjoyed the camp and learned a lot. It was fun and interesting. I discovered, with the help of my teacher, all of the choices you have in Power Point program! I learned to put sounds and motions into my presentation."

-- A GEAR UP Student

A partnership agreement between GEAR UP and Girlstart made it possible for 17 girls to attend Girlstart camp sessions during the month of June. The purpose of the camp was to empower girls to excel in math, science, and technology. Camp participants learned new concepts and skills such as fingerprinting, DNA testing, physics and engineering principles, and problem solving strategies. After the camp, 16 of the participants responded to camp evaluation questions. A summary of results is provided below:

- 94% said that Girstart made them feel better about themselves.
- 94% said that Girlstart made them feel more confident about their skills in math, science, and technology.
- 88% said that Girlstart encouraged them to think about careers in math, science, and technology.
- 69% said Girlstart increased their interest in science, math, and technology.
- 88% said Girlstart helped them realize how math and science are important to their education and career.
- 82% said that they plan to take more science, math, and technology coursework.

In addition to academic support focused on core curriculum areas, the GEAR UP project and project partner, Learning Systems, planned and implemented summer learning opportunities designed to begin preparing students for the SAT and ACT tests. Two sessions of two-week mini camps were provided focusing on preparing students to take the SAT and ACT tests. A total of 291 students attended these mini-camps during June 2001.

An evaluation of the SAT/ACT preparation camps was completed by 84 of 133 students (63%) participating during the second camp session. Once again, the responses to each item on the survey were positive and a complete evaluation summary is provided in Appendix L. Most of the students indicated that they were able to begin understanding the importance of college entrance exams and how to prepare for success.

"It (the camp) helped me understand more about colleges and how to get to the college I want to go to."

"The camps helped me learn how to solve more math problems and gave me more skills to take the tests."

"I got to see my friends, and it was fun. And, any help for the SAT/ACT for free is AWESOME!"

-- GEAR UP students attending SAT preparation camps

Finally, 16 students from Dobie Middle School were able to attend a week-long camp developed through a joint effort between GEAR UP project staff and Huston-Tillotson, a college project partner. Students and their parents stayed on the campus throughout the week in college dorm rooms. Each morning, students would participate in SAT/ACT mini-camp activities. Each afternoon, students would attend history and physics classes that utilized an interdisciplinary approach to teach students about the history of nuclear energy and concepts underlying nuclear physics. In the evenings, students had the opportunity to engage in a fine arts program that encouraged them to explore "empowerment". In culmination, students presented their learning with Power Point presentations and a performance, Arts of Expression, using poetry, song, drama, and interpretive dance.

The project evaluator observed camp sessions one afternoon during the camp. The objective of the sessions was to have the 7th grade students use their scientific understanding of the nuclear bomb and implications for using such force during a role-play exercise. Students were to list pros and cons for using the nuclear bomb against Japan in World War II and advise the President to use or not use nuclear force. Additionally, students viewed film clips from 1950's movies and commercials. They identified ways that the culture of the United States was impacted by the development of nuclear energy.

Using a classroom observation protocol, the session observed was rated highly. Students were attentive and actively participated in the classroom activities. They demonstrated a high level of comprehension and analytical thinking processes as they discussed concepts and presented their work. The instructor was creative and enthusiastic. She used questioning strategies that encouraged the students to delve into complex issues. Two parents who were present that afternoon made sure to express their support for the camp experience. One parent said, *"With an education like this, I know my child is going to college!"*

Results: Enhanced Guidance and Counseling Service Component

The enhanced guidance and counseling component is designed to develop student awareness of college and career opportunities and the processes involved in taking advantage of those opportunities. GEAR UP project objectives (Appendix I) articulate a series of activities to take place that will prepare students to become enrolled in a post-

secondary institution upon graduation. It is expected that all students will engage in these activities throughout the project's duration.

Student Needs Assessment

In order to begin creating college awareness and collecting baseline data, the GEAR UP project planned and implemented campus-based Kick-Off Celebrations. These celebrations were held at each GEAR UP campus throughout the months of February and March. All GEAR UP students and their parents were invited to attend. The Kick-Off events were designed to create hope and excitement for the students' educational future.

"I had a smaller turnout for the Kick-Off. But, the parents that did come spread the word to others. The event helped begin a relationship between the school and family. Parents have told me that they think GEAR UP can really help them."

--A GEAR UP Facilitator

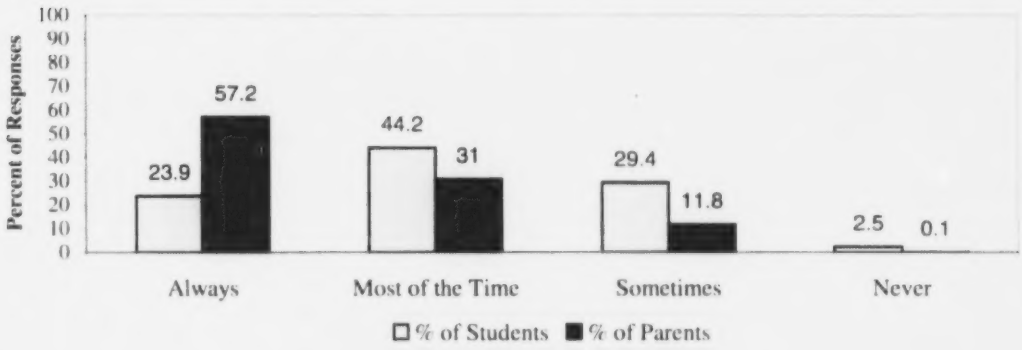
The agenda for these meetings included an overview of academic preparation and family support services provided by GEAR UP and college financial aid information featuring guest speakers, entertainment, and refreshments. GEAR UP students in attendance received information on federal college financial aid opportunities and their 21st Century Scholarship certificate that provided recognition of their upcoming participation in GEAR UP. Project facilitators distributed the remaining certificates and information to students not attending the Kick-Off during school hours. Approximately 929 parents attended these celebrations across the district, and several campuses reported record-breaking attendance counts for parent meetings held at their schools. The parents received a folder containing a GEAR UP brochure in English or Spanish, a parent survey, a parent participation contract, and brochures on the Recommended High School Program and TEXAS Grant. Project staff continued to contact parents not in attendance at the Kick-Off to distribute the brochure and participation contract. To date, 1,265 parents have signed the participation contract. A copy of the parent participation contract is provided in Appendix L of this report. GEAR UP staff will continue to distribute and collect signed parent participation contracts until 100% of the cohort families are represented.

The parent and student surveys completed during the Kick-Offs and in classrooms provided information for project planning and evaluation purposes, especially in the area of guidance and counseling needs. The results of the parent and student surveys are reported in entirety in Appendices C and D. However, there were a few items on the survey that were of particular interest to project management and staff as they would aid in the initial development and implementation of the project. These items are reported below.

Because the general premise of the GEAR UP program is to communicate high expectations for student performance, it was important to project staff to learn more about student and parents perceptions towards school and levels of academic achievement. According to the project survey, parents had higher expectations for their child's ability to perform well in school. The results showed that 57% of parents believed that their child *always* had the ability to do well in school while another 31% believed that their child

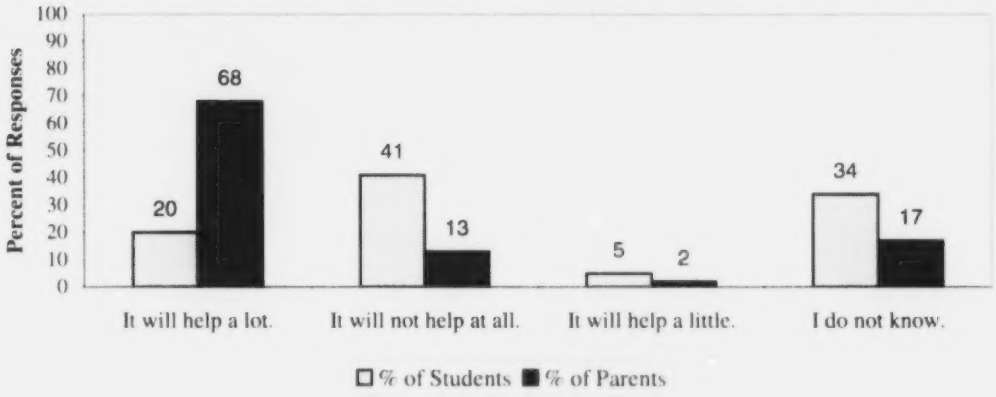
could do well in school *most of the time*. Students had lower expectations for their own performance as only 24% felt that they had to ability *always* to do well in school, 44% felt they could do well in school *most of the time*, and 29% felt that they *sometimes* had the ability to do well in school. This disconnect between parent and student expectations was of interest to project staff and student perceptions will be followed throughout the course of the project.

Figure 8: "Child Has the Ability to Do Well in School" as Reported by GEAR UP Students and Their Parents, February-March 2001



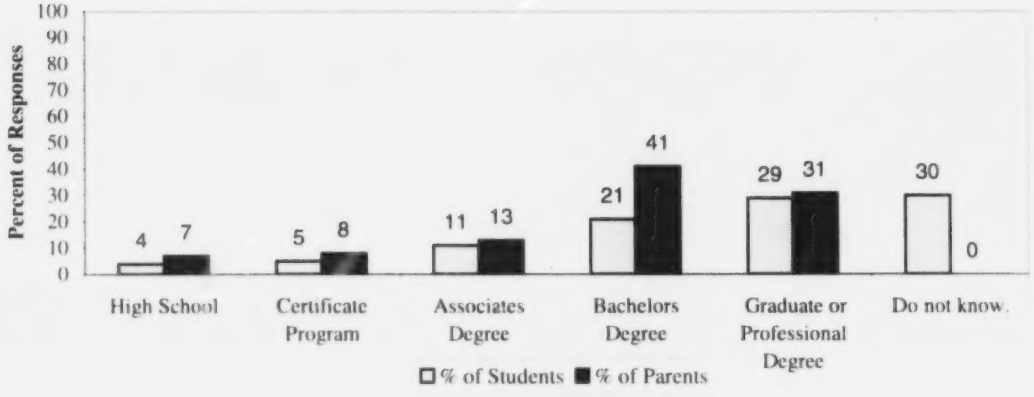
The survey also showed that parents and students had different expectations of how much the student's academic performance would improve as a result of participation in the GEAR UP Project. Parents are expecting that the project will help their child's academic performance, with 68% expecting it to help a lot as opposed to only 13% not expecting it to help at all. Students seem to have mixed feelings about how much the project can help their academic performance; 20% report that the project will help a lot, 41% expect that it will not help at all, and 34% do not know how much the project will help. Once again, parent expectations were higher than the students'. Student expectations for improvement will continue to be monitored throughout the project. The following figure illustrates the parent and student responses.

Figure 9: Expectations of Improved Academic Performance as Reported by GEAR UP Students and Their Parents, February-March 2001



On the survey, students and parents were asked to indicate their expected level of educational attainment. The majority of students and parents indicated that they expected some type of post-secondary enrollment with less than 10% expecting to finish high school only. However, 30% of the students indicated that they "did not know" what level of schooling they would complete. Most parents indicated that they expected their child to achieve a bachelor's (41%) or graduate degree (31%). The following figure shows the parent and student schooling level expectations.

Figure 10: Level of Schooling Expected by GEAR UP Students and Their Parents, February-March 2001



To identify obstacles to postsecondary enrollment, project staff asked students and parents to indicate reasons that might prevent student postsecondary enrollment. Students and parents alike were concerned about the high cost of continuing education. Students also indicated that low grades were an issue. Many parents (39%) chose "not applicable",

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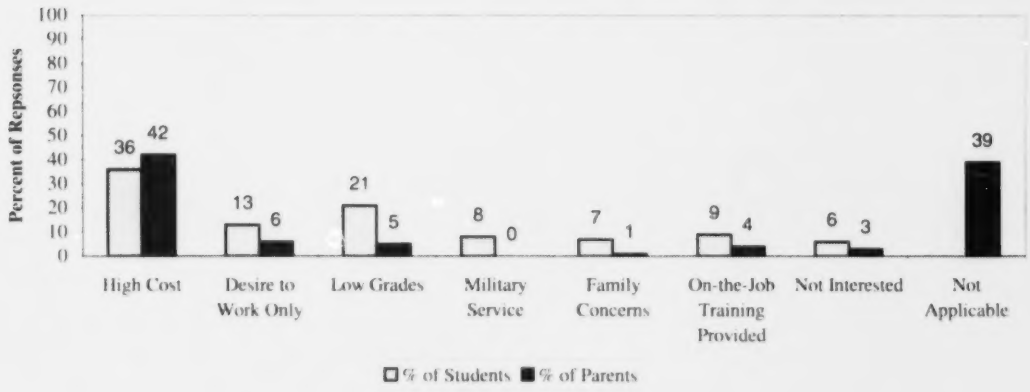
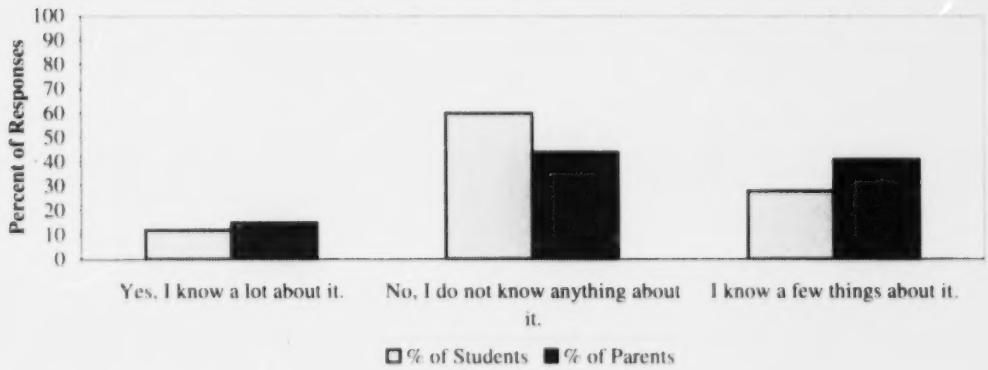
as they had previously indicated on the survey that their child would continue their education after high school. Figure 11 summarizes their responses.

Figure 11: Reasons for Not Enrolling in a Post Secondary Institution After High School as Reported by GEAR UP Students and Their Parents, February-March 2001



While knowing that the costs for college are high, parents and students report that they are also lacking in knowledge of exactly how much college will cost them. Most students and their parents over-estimated the amount of tuition and fees by more than $500, the average annual cost for a four-year public college in Texas being $2,627 for tuition and fees. The survey revealed that only 29% of GEAR UP students and 27% of GEAR UP parents were able to accurately estimate the average cost of tuition and fees at a four-year public college for one year. The following figure shows that students and their parents need more information concerning college financial aid.

Figure 12: Knowledge of Financial Aid as Reported by GEAR UP Students and Their Parents, February-March 2001



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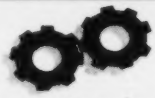
Using the data from the parent and student surveys, the GEAR UP project management and staff were able to develop project services that would focus initially on a few key issues. The GEAR UP guidance and counseling component would initially:

- develop programs designed to increase students' perceptions that they can succeed in school;
- inform students of academic support services available to them through the GEAR UP project;
- help students begin setting goals for post-secondary education; and
- provide information concerning educational financial aid resources available to students upon high school graduation.

Guidance and Counseling Support Services

With the support of the district and project partners (Junior Achievement, the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, Partners in Education, and the Capital Area Training Foundation), cohort students at all GEAR UP schools participated in a comprehensive career education program, the IACP Bridge. The IACP curriculum enabled students to examine their interests, aptitudes, and work-related values. All cohort students participated in a series of classroom activities and completed interest inventories and individual academic career plans. These documents will be placed in the GEAR UP student portfolio. However, only 839 of GEAR UP cohort students were able to participate in job shadowing experiences due to scheduling difficulties within a short time frame.

During interviews, the project facilitators talked about their role in the IACP process. They suggested that the initiative would benefit by combining the efforts of GEAR UP staff, district personnel, and project partners to implement the IACP process. All of the facilitators perceived the program to be a benefit to students. They discussed the importance of job shadowing experiences. Facilitators believed that the experiences would begin enabling students to create an awareness of a large variety of career paths. Facilitators expressed disappointment that not all students had the opportunity to engage in a job shadowing experience due to the large numbers of students needing to participate, scheduling conflicts, and time constraints.



"Job shadowing has communicated to kids that they have potential for success. They can begin planning immediately for their future"

-- GEAR UP Project Facilitator

The reports from project facilitators support the findings of an independent evaluation of the IACP Bridge program conducted by the Indiana Center for Evaluation (Metcalf, 2001). The evaluation results indicated that that the program had significant promise for improving student educational and career choices. Students responded positively to the program, as they were encouraged to consider educational choices and future career options. Teachers believed that their students had unique opportunities to

learn about their future choices and highly praised the job shadowing experiences when they occurred. Further, the evaluation found that the job shadowing experience was possibly the most valuable part of the program and recommended that steps be taken to afford all students with the experience.

In order to begin preparing students to identify post-secondary institutions for enrollment (Objective II C, Appendix I), GEAR UP project staff organized college visits for all cohort students. Eight GEAR UP campuses worked with higher education project partners to conduct college visits for the 7th grade student cohort. These partners included the University of Texas, Austin Community College, St. Edward's University, Huston–Tillotson College, and Southwest Texas State University. The University of Texas at San Antonio, Texas State Technical College, and Concordia Lutheran University also hosted college visits for GEAR UP students. These institutions were not originally designated as project partners but invited the GEAR UP students to their campuses. The college visits began March 3rd and continued throughout the spring semester. A total of 2,670 GEAR UP students toured the college campuses.

"Our students really enjoyed having the opportunity to visit the college campuses. They were very impressed by the college students. They are beginning to ask more questions about getting to college."

--A GEAR UP Facilitator

Faculty and staff from the higher education institutions helped to design the college visits for GEAR UP students. Each partner planned activities that highlighted the uniqueness of each campus and how it would meet various student needs. Going beyond the traditional walking tour, students were able to explore the campuses in a variety of creative formats. For example, students learned about college entrance requirements and lifestyle as they participated in hands-on science activities in college lab facilities, attended a Big 12 Swim Championship, took part in panel discussions led by current college students, identified key college information through a scavenger hunt, and learned about college financial aid through a game show format.

At the end of the Spring semester, representatives from the GEAR UP higher education partners and project facilitators met to discuss the outcomes of the college visits. Field notes and meeting documents showed that the higher education partners supported future college visits, stating that they seemed to be a valuable experience for cohort students. GEAR UP project facilitators and representatives from the higher education institutions agreed that the age appropriate presentations by the college students and/or staff provided specific information about college life, financial aid, and academic requirements. They also stated that they thought the use of college student ambassadors from diverse backgrounds to guide the tours provided students

"The kids are beginning to see that we want them to succeed rather than meet minimum requirements. They have the opportunity to understand that we want to know who they are and where they are going."

– GEAR UP Project Facilitator

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with positive role models. All meeting participants agreed that the experience should be repeated with minor, logistical modifications. A few of the higher education partners committed to expanding their services for the next year.

During interviews, the facilitators highly praised the college visit experience. While acknowledging difficulties encountered when planning for large group participation, they shared many examples of increased student awareness for future opportunities and motivation to succeed in school that occurred as a result of these visits. Facilitators reported that students were beginning to view GEAR UP as more than "*just an anti-dropout program*" as students were reported to ask increasingly more questions about getting to college. Also, facilitators described conversations with parents focused on services that GEAR UP could provide.

Guided by first year project objectives (Objective II C, Appendix I), GEAR UP College and Career Centers were established. These centers are to serve as teaching labs that focus on helping students and their parents explore college and career options as well as support academic instructional needs. The labs will provide students with state of the art computers, laser printers, and LCD projectors. Texas Cares and Oscar are two initial software packages to be featured in the labs that will enable students to explore college and career opportunities. The labs will also support academic instruction. Students may use the labs to complete classroom assignments requiring the use of internet resources or technical preparation.

During the first project year, all AISD, charter school, and housing development facilities were evaluated and modified for computer installation. State-of-the-art hardware and software for the centers began arriving late in the Spring 2001 semester. The centers were completed throughout Summer 2001 and made ready for the following fall semester. Centers at four campuses were used during technology summer camp sessions.

Further, the GEAR UP technology specialist designed and established a website focused on providing students, parents, and school personnel with information and support in line with project objectives. The website includes a program description, project activity updates, college and financial aid information, academic support networks, parenting resources, and on-line teaching tools. The address will be included on various GEAR UP publications distributed to students, parents, teachers, and others. For more information, please review the website at www.gearupaustin.org.

Results: Professional Development Component

Professional development is an important avenue for making a meaningful change in classroom instruction in order to meet student needs. The GEAR UP project is committed to providing project staff and teachers with quality professional development support needed to improve practice, thereby improving the educational experiences for students (Refer to Objectives in Appendix I). Additionally, GEAR UP will provide professional development for project partners, so that they may have the necessary information and tools to appropriately support the project.

Development for GEAR UP Staff

To aid in the initial project start-up, GEAR UP staff engaged in a series of professional development opportunities. Project management provided immediate training for GEAR UP staff in a variety of areas. First, GEAR UP staff members were given an orientation on the project's goals and objectives. Much of this training covered the project budget organization and procedures for using funds. Interviews with the project facilitators revealed the need for continued budget/finance training as the processes for project spending were multi-layered and very complex.

As the district implemented campus-based IMPACT teams, all GEAR UP staff completed extensive training enabling them to work with a campus IMPACT team in order to address individual student needs using information such as academic progress, attendance, mobility, TAAS preparation, discipline, and issues specific to special education needs. During interviews, the IMPACT team was identified by the facilitators as being a valuable source of information necessary for providing students with appropriate GEAR UP support services. However, interviews revealed that not all project facilitators were actively involved with campus IMPACT teams.

Additionally, GEAR UP staff attended several professional conferences including the National and State GEAR UP conferences, the Texas Association for College Admission Counseling State Conference, and the Texas Association of School Boards Conference. These conferences enabled GEAR UP staff to engage in networking opportunities, obtain student and family support information, and learn strategies to design and implement GEAR UP student support services more effectively. During interviews, all project facilitators reported that the opportunity to attend the conferences was the most valuable professional development opportunity for the year. The experiences allowed them to gather information and exchange ideas with other key professionals.

GEAR UP Teacher Professional Development Overview

The GEAR UP project, district curriculum personnel, and staff from the AISD professional development academy engaged in a series of meetings to collaborate on the provision of quality professional development for teachers and campus staff working with GEAR UP students. As a result, existing AISD professional development academy courses supporting GEAR UP goals and objectives were identified. Cohort teachers were encouraged to enroll in these courses in preparation to support cohort students' academic needs. Of all 7th grade cohort teachers, 53% took advantage of these identified professional development opportunities. The following table provides a summary of GEAR UP teacher completion of suggested coursework offered by AISD professional development academy.

Table 7: GEAR UP Teachers Completing Professional Development Courses from AISD Professional Development Academy, 2000-2001

School Name	Number of GEAR UP Teachers	Number of GEAR UP Teachers Completing AISD Professional Development Academy Courses N / % of Teachers	Average Number of Continuing Professional Education (CPE) Hours	Median Number of Continuing Professional Education (CPE) Hours
Burnet	27	14 / 52%	19	14.3
Dobie	27	16 (59%)	55.6	53.7
Fulmore	28	21 (75%)	12.3	6
Kealing	43	12 (28%)	25.1	12
Martin	22	8 (36%)	7.9	6
Mendez	19	15 (79%)	11	6
Paredes	15	4 (27%)	7	6
Pearce	18	11 (61%)	39	30
Porter	20	14 (70%)	10.7	6
Webb	18	9 (50%)	38.3	15
TOTAL	245 (100%)	127 (52%)	23.4	10.5

Source: Teacher CPE hours reported by AISD Professional Development Academy, September 2001

Additionally, the GEAR UP project supported teachers as they participated in a variety of professional development opportunities outside of the Professional Development Academy offerings. Teachers were able to attend professional conferences, workshops, and engage in curriculum development activities. Professional development funds also covered the costs of speakers and trainers contracted to provide campus-level workshops related to specific teaching and learning needs. The GEAR budget often covered the cost of substitutes for the classroom and supplied teachers with stipends and/or registration fees as they engaged in professional development opportunities focused on core curriculum or test preparation skills.

Using sign-in sheets and professional development certificates , teachers and project facilitators documented professional development taking place outside the AISD Professional Development Academy. Because of the variability in the ways that the professional development was reported and the ways teachers were credited for their continued learning, continuing hours of education were not calculated. However, the

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following table shows how much each GEAR UP campus spent supporting professional development.

Table 8: Summary of GEAR UP Professional Development Expenditures, 2000-2001

Campus Name	Amount
Burnet	$11,975.00
Dobie	$ 7,350.00
Fulmore	$ 3,137.00
Kealing	$8,375.00
Martin	$5,975.00
Mendez	$11,400.00
Paredes	$13,735.00
Pearce	$2,250.00
Porter	$3,700.00
Webb	$9,307.00
Texas Empowerment Academy	$2,470.00
TOTAL	**$79,674.00**

Source: Professional development expenditures documented within GEAR UP budget report for the 2000-2001 project year.

Project facilitators were asked to provide information concerning the GEAR UP professional development support. During interviews, they identified concerns for consideration in the further development of the professional development component. All project facilitators reported difficulty in recruiting teachers to take advantage of professional development opportunities. Several facilitators spent time discussing the value in extended learning opportunities for teachers, but they were at a loss on how to articulate the need for and commitment to continued professional development. A few facilitators suggested that teachers may prefer participating in a focused training and development series rather than random, "one-shot" opportunities. Further, the interview data revealed that one of the major obstacles to completing in the additional professional development hours was the shortage of substitutes to cover the classroom while the teacher is away.

GEAR UP Professional Development Initiatives

On May 31st and June 1st, 2001, Learning Systems consultants, a GEAR UP partner, conducted a two-day training course for 7th and 8th grade teachers teaching a summer SAT Preparation mini-camp for GEAR UP students. Forty-two teachers attended the two-day training focused on PSAT/SAT format and scoring, strategies for analyzing test items, and suggestions for implementing the course. At the end of this training, all participants were asked to assess their training experience based on a series of statements to which they would indicate their agreement or disagreement. Thirty-nine of forty-two participants completed the survey. Participants also attended a de-briefing session in August to discuss their training and mini-camp experiences.

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Overall, teachers rated highly the SAT/ACT mini-camp training that they received. In the area of the content and instruction, teachers felt that the course communicated clear learning objectives, was aligned with the course objectives, and was taught in an environment conducive to learning. They reported that the trainers were organized, knowledgeable, and used effective training techniques. In a debriefing meeting held in August after the camps were completed, teachers discussed camp implementation and student reponse to the camps. Teachers attributed the success of the camps to an intensive professional development experience, a well-designed curriculum, and the recruitment of dedicated students. They shared specific experiences and discussed scaling up operations next year. Refer to Appendix G for a complete summary.

"This training was the best I have ever attended. They gave me all of the tools necessary to be successful in the classroom. I was excellently prepared to teach."

-- A GEAR UP teacher

Seeking to improve student performance in writing, GEAR UP provided stipends for teachers to attend the Capital City Writes Institute for three weeks. This training provided cohort teachers with an intensive writing experience as they learned writing process theory and instructional strategies. The training also incorporated the use of Principles of Learning (Clear Expectations and Accountable Talk) assessment strategies to inform their instruction. Twenty-seven GEAR UP teachers were trained, at a cost of $1125 per teacher, for a total of $30,375.

Results: Parental Involvement Component

Parental involvement is an important factor in student school success. The parental involvement component of the GEAR UP project is designed to

- supply parents with the information necessary to support their child's academic growth and enter college;
- enable parents to improve parenting skills; and
- provide opportunities for parents to participate in their child's school activities.

A unique feature of GEAR UP is the employment of a GEAR UP full-time Parent Support Specialist on each campus. The primary responsibility for this position is to maintain consistent and frequent communication with the parents of the GEAR UP cohort. They will work closely with parents of children who are struggling academically, behaviorally, or with attendance, as well as with other issues.

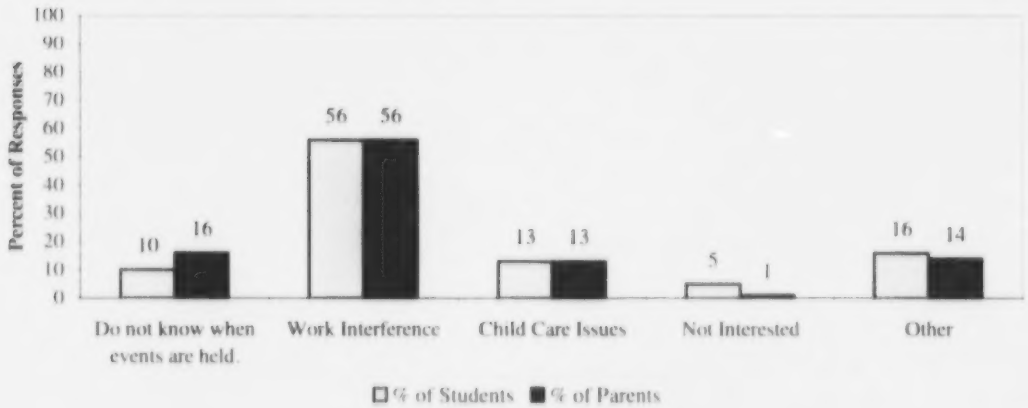
Parent Needs Assessment

As discussed previously, the campus Kick-Off events provided initial communication with the parents of the GEAR UP cohort. One of the most important elements of this meeting was to communicate to parents that they were an important part of their child's success. The parents were specifically asked to be a partner in education

throughout the next five years. To formalize this commitment, parents were asked to sign a contract pledging their participation. As previously noted, 1,265 parents have signed the parent contract.

Recognizing that parents may face obstacles in participating fully in their child's school experience, the parent survey was used to collect information about the barriers parents face when participating in school activities. The survey indicated that work hours were the primary obstacle to their participation in school events. Project staff will use the information when planning and scheduling GEAR UP parent events, offering services multiple times taking place during various times of the day (Objectives IV A, B, C in Appendix I). The following figure summarizes the parent survey responses.

Figure 13: Reasons for Not Attending School Events as Reported by GEAR UP Students and Their Parents



In addition to collecting information about participation barriers, parents identified areas of learning interest. First, 80% of parents would like to attend workshops to learn more about college and career opportunities that would be available for their children. Second, 78% would like to attend financial aid seminars. Third, 61% of parents reported that they would like to attend sessions on developing effective parenting skills.

Parent Services

Using information obtained from the parent surveys, a limited number of GEAR UP parent services were implemented during the Spring 2001 semester. Project facilitators and parent involvement representatives planned and held 38 smaller meetings at their campuses designed to address parenting skill needs, financial aid concerns, and academic counseling. Avance, a project partner, facilitated some of these parent meetings. The Avance meetings were conducted in English and Spanish and focused on helping parents to set goals for their children and plan for the years beyond high school. Further, GEAR UP staff set aside time to communicate with parents personally through phone conversations, home visits, and individual conference appointments held at the school.

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Project staff are currently identifying parents to participate in Train-the-Trainer sessions designed to provide parents with specific tools they can use to teach parenting and advocacy skills to their peers. DAAMARS and Avance, along with parent involvement representatives, will conduct these parent-training sessions. Services are scheduled to begin Fall 2001.

As described previously, Huston Tillotson faculty and staff planned and developed a unique summer camp experience for GEAR UP students attending Dobie Middle School. Not only did the camp provide rigorous academic preparation for the students, but parents had the opportunity to experience living on a college campus with their children. They were able to eat in the college's cafeterias and walk through the campus daily on their way to the summer camp classes. This provided parents who may not have been to college with a glimpse of what a college lifestyle might be like.

The relationship developed by a GEAR UP campus and the area project housing management has developed a unique support network for cohort families. GEAR UP and project housing staff worked together have worked together to coordinate home visits. Further, they are working with Austin Parks and Recreation personnel to coordinate after school and weekend activities for the students living in projects housing. These joint efforts provide a means to recruit parents for volunteer work with the GEAR UP project. The time that parents spend as a school volunteer will be documented and count towards community service hours required to obtain welfare benefits.

The benefits of the parent involvement component were addressed during interviews with project facilitators. Project facilitators made many statements during the interviews supporting the use of additional campus staff members to specifically address parenting needs. With the support of a full-time parent specialist, facilitators described the project's potential to positively affect students and their families. Facilitators reported that GEAR UP staff participation in parent conferences has been an initial project contribution as they have served as a contact liaison between support services. For example, GEAR UP campus staff worked to establish cooperative relationships with area project housing management. They have worked together to coordinate home visits. Further, project staff and the housing project contacts have worked with the City of Austin Parks and Recreation personnel to coordinate after-school and weekend activities for the students at the housing projects too. Together, GEAR UP staff and project housing management are beginning to recruit parents for volunteer work with GEAR UP. Parent time spent as a school volunteer is documented and will count towards community service hours required to obtain welfare benefits.

However, the interviews revealed concerns about ensuring the effectiveness and quality of the parent involvement component activities. They identified obstacles to establishing and maintaining effective communication with parents. First, the transient nature of the student population provides a challenge to maintain current parent contact information. Facilitators stressed the importance of having access to the most current student information. They indicated that they often felt frustrated and ineffective because they did not have the information necessary to contact parents when the need arose. Further, facilitators discussed a need for additional staff training. They indicated that

training was needed in the following areas: 1) the student referral process, 2) the utilization of social services, 3) conducting home visits, and 4) computer literacy.

Overwhelmingly, project staff wanted training that would assist them in developing personal communication and social interaction skills to use when interacting with students and their families. Third, facilitators discussed the challenge in effectively using the parent involvement representative. They suggested further development of specific staff job descriptions in order to avoid the duplication of staff efforts.

DISCUSSION

Throughout the first year of implementation, this project has experienced some of the familiar successes and growing pains that many new programs encounter. A five-month planning phase began in September 2000. During this time, concerted effort was put into staffing, planning, budgeting, and training. Implementation of a variety student and parent services began in February 2001 extending through June 2001. During the month of August 2001, project staff engaged in another round of training and planning for the next official project year set to begin September 15th. There are project successes and challenges that should be noted.

Project Successes

Results from multiple data sources are consistently positive. Relying on multiple sources of student data to make project decisions, GEAR UP has begun to provide valuable academic support interventions for students. A few of the major project successes are described below.

The results show that participants have positive perceptions of the GEAR UP project. Not only do GEAR UP staff communicate their enthusiasm for the project, but they have demonstrated their commitment as they have implemented a large number of quality parent and student services within a very short period of time. Students report that the services are enjoyable and valuable. Parents have expressed their appreciation of and commitment to the project. Teachers and project staff have also reported the professional benefits that they have received due to their direct involvement.

The GEAR UP project supports other district initiatives designed to improve student achievement by providing students with a reliable source of academic support. While the baseline data show TAAS scores did not improve for the GEAR UP students in the first year of project implementation, GEAR UP staff demonstrated committment to conducting an ongoing assessment of student learning needs, providing appropriate academic support, and tracking student progress. Project partners have demonstrated their support for the project through the donation of their expertise and resources as tutoring services and summer camps were put into place. Students had opportunities to participate in ongoing tutoring services focused on their specific learning needs and to engage in rigorous academic work within enjoyable camp environments.

The guidance and counseling component of the project appears to have encouraged students to begin thinking and planning for their futures. Students have had many opportunities to explore their aptitudes and career interests as they participated in the IACP process, job-shadowing experiences, and work with mentors. Students and their families were provided with information about college financial aid as they attended GEAR UP meetings and visited colleges. The college and career centers will provide a constant available source of information about student career choices and college options.

GEAR UP begun to provide teachers with professional development support. The GEAR UP staff has demonstrated the commitment to teacher support by identifying professional development sessions that directly relate to project objectives and making that information available to teachers. Additionally, the GEAR UP partnership sponsored

several professional development training opportunities directly aligned with project goals that may not have been available to teachers otherwise. Teachers were provided with substitutes so that they could participate in professional development sessions taking place during the school day. Also, teachers were provided with stipends for their participation in ongoing education opportunities.

While limited in implementation during the first semester, the parental involvement component shows promise for parent support. GEAR UP staff increased the level of communication between the school and parents. They have held a number of small parent meetings, conducted home visits, made personal phone calls, and referred families to other support services as needed. Parents have indicated that they are supportive of and have high expectations for the project.

Challenges

As noted in earlier sections, challenges were presented along the way. However, the project management and staff made the necessary adjustments to carry out project plans without deviating from the scope of the grant. The project director has consistently used formative project evaluation data to make planning and implementation decisions. As preliminary evaluative information became available, the data was reviewed and project modifications were made in a timely manner. A few examples of project fine-tuning and adaptations follow.

Academic Intervention Issues

At the end of May 2001, interview data initially revealed areas for improvement in the GEAR UP tutoring program. The project director immediately acted on this need for improvement. The Professional Development and Technology Specialist was hired and began working in June. The specialist worked through the summer with AISD central office curriculum personnel to design and implement tutor training. The first in a series of tutor trainings addressing both reading and math teaching strategies was completed the first week of September, with 62 mentor/tutors participating. A series of mentor/tutor trainings is planned for the next project year.

Formative data revealed that the agenda for college visits should be adjusted to provide more meaningful student learning. Project management acted immediately on this need by holding a de-briefing meeting with the project's higher education partners at the end of the school year. The partners and project staff agreed upon specific recommendations for improvement. Planning committees for next year's college visits were established at the May de-briefing meeting. College visits for the 2001-2002 school year are in the process of being planned.

The evaluation of GEAR UP summer camps revealed that the experiences were perceived by the students as being enjoyable while offering quality educational experiences contributing to their future academic success. However, the initial offering of summer camp experiences was limited, considering that there are approximately 3,300 students who could be served. The project director recognized the need for increased capacity to serve students during the summer. She began addressing this need in project debriefing meetings with school principals and project partners beginning in May 2001.

During the debriefing meetings, participants were asked to assess how they could contribute to next year's summer programming. A series of meetings with project partners have been scheduled to discuss upcoming summer program implementation and student recruiting. A GEAR UP staff committee has been established and will begin planning for Summer 2002 programs.

Professional Development Issues

Data showed that the GEAR UP project supported the professional development of project staff and teachers. The project management has identified courses offered by AISD professional development academy supporting GEAR UP goals and objectives for the cohort teachers to complete. Additionally, some project staff and teachers participated in other professional development opportunities such as national and regional conferences. However, many GEAR UP teachers did not complete these additional 20 hours of professional development for the 2000-2001 school year.

Data revealed that the lack of teacher participation in professional development may be due to several reasons. Many teachers did not make the commitment to support GEAR UP through increased participation in the professional development. Teacher time to follow through with daily job responsibilities is precious, and professional development may be seen by many teachers as being superfluous. With the unavailability of substitutes, teachers may have been unable to attend professional development sessions held during the school day. Finally, teachers may still have been unaware of the variety of professional development options available to them.

To address these issues, project management has already begun to develop a more focused approach to providing professional development for GEAR UP staff and teachers. The project director has continued to communicate with principals about GEAR UP support in the area of professional development, offering suggestions for staff participation. The technology and professional development specialist has identified PDA courses available to teachers. This new list has been streamlined to offer focused support for GEAR UP objectives. The list of suggested professional development courses offered through the AISD Professional Development Academy has already been distributed to project staff and cohort teachers.

Project partners have committed to offering increased numbers of professional development sessions during the second year of the grant. Planning for these opportunities is underway. Professional development will be held in a variety of locations across the district to encourage participation. A significant amount of professional development will happen during the summer when teachers will be free to attend workshops without needing substitutes. Finally, the GEAR UP project director and professional development specialist have begun working with district curriculum specialists to coordinate efforts in providing ongoing professional development serving cohort teacher needs.

Parent Involvement Issues

The project director faced a challenging staffing task for the project. Between November and January twenty-three staff positions were filled and the project developed an operational infrastructure. However throughout the Spring semester, the project faced

turnover in the parent involvement staff position at five campuses. Interviews with project facilitators indicated that staff turnover, coupled with a short timeline for project implementation, was a factor in the limited implementation of the parent involvement component.

Knowing that the staff turnover would limit the services developed for parents, the project director examined the trend in staff turnover and made modifications. She worked with project staff to identify specific skills needed to work effectively with parents. Subsequently, an improved job description and guidelines for implementing parent services were developed. Using the improved job description, all parent involvement representative positions were filled for the upcoming project year. To support them, additional professional development opportunities for parent involvement representative participation were identified and scheduled to begin in September 2001.

Recommendations

The results of this evaluation were compellingly optimistic for the newly developed *GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project.* A large amount of quality work was completed within a relatively short time frame. Project modifications were made in a timely fashion as a direct result of formative data use. In review of primarily positive results, the following recommendations have been identified for further consideration during the next stages of project implementation:

1. *Use the most current student academic achievement information to develop procedures for tracking the academic progress of a highly mobile student population and implement effective program services.* Repeatedly, project staff described the challenges of providing consistent and effective academic support for a highly mobile student population. Getting information concerning student academic performance in a timely manner seemed to be a hurdle to providing effective tutoring services, appropriate summer camp development, and parent support services. Utilization of the district student information system (SASI) could be an important resource for effective tutoring and summer camp implementation. This may require district authorization for GEAR UP staff use and additional staff training.

2. *Increase the use of small groups or one-on-one tutoring services.* Project staff and tutors report that there is great potential to increase the academic performance for students participating in tutoring services provided by GEAR UP. In the initial stages of implementation, tutoring was most likely to be offered through joint teaching experiences within the classroom or in groups of 4-5 students. However, project staff also reported that students often need additional intensive academic assistance that may not be consistently provided. It is recommended that project staff explore ways to provide additional opportunities for small group and one-on-one tutoring experiences. This may require hiring additional tutoring staff or offering more tutoring sessions outside the classroom or school day.

3. *Increase the numbers of GEAR UP cohort students enrolled in advanced placement courses and provide intensive academic support for those students.* Research shows that students that take challenging courses are much more likely to succeed in school and continue on to college. The review of student enrollment data shows that a smaller percentage of GEAR UP students as compared to non-GEAR UP students have been enrolled in more rigorous coursework options. As students begin planning their high school course plans, GEAR UP staff should identify students for advanced coursework placement and begin educating the students and their parents on the benefits of completing rigorous coursework. Project staff should begin supporting students currently enrolled in advanced courses with tutoring services and summer camp opportunities.

4. *Provide job-shadowing for all students.* GEAR UP staff highly praised the job shadowing opportunities sponsored by Junior Achievement and GEAR UP. Because the project did not begin offering job-shadowing experiences until the Spring semester, a limited number of students were able to participate. It is suggested that the identification of community participants and scheduling of shadowing opportunities begin earlier in the school year.

5. *Continue the assessment of GEAR UP teacher professional development needs.* The GEAR UP project has substantial resources to provide teachers with state of the art professional development. Even with these resources, there was limited teacher participation in professional development. Project management should continue to examine teacher needs, incentives, and obstacles to participation in order increase teacher involvement in professional development.

6. *Provide additional and ongoing GEAR UP sponsored professional development directly aligned with project goals and objectives.* The project initially provides teachers with substantial financial resources necessary to participate in professional development opportunities. However, for professional development to be highly effective, teachers must be able to engage in high quality, on-going learning related to specific student learning needs. It is suggested that GEAR UP go beyond identifying "one shot" workshops, and developing intensive and sustained professional development initiatives like the Capital City Writes program. Not only does this type of professional development provide quality learning, but also it is designed to develop capacity for sustained teacher learning.

7. *Continue to assess parent learning needs and offer expanded parent involvement opportunities.* Parent involvement is a key factor in the success of students in school. Although parents have initially expressed excitement about and high expectations for the GEAR UP project, parent participation in GEAR UP sponsored events is currently limited. Project management should continue to examine parent needs and obstacles to their participation, and explore various methods for meeting

those needs. This may require identifying parent leaders to serve on project planning committees, such as the GEAR UP advisory council.

8. *Continue to measure student progress, establish benchmarks, and adjust project activities accordingly.* The GEAR UP project has begun to successfully meet the project objectives articulated within the original project proposal. As additional project services are developed, expected levels of achievement for each objective in each year of the project should be identified. This would enable the project to continue making substantial progress towards attaining project goals and ultimately meeting student needs.

Conclusion

The *GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project* has begun to experience successes both small and large. As indicated by a variety of information sources, a climate of concern and excitement for making a real difference in the lives of kids is growing. While the project staff encountered some hurdles and project services were not always implemented to the level stated by project objectives, the efforts to use formative data to make ongoing decisions to improve student services should be applauded. This process coupled with the dedication and creativity of project staff and partners shows great potential for ensuring student success through the provision of rigorous academic coursework, comprehensive support services, and information about college opportunities and financial aid.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: NATIONAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR GAINING EARLY AWARENESS AND READINESS FOR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

The purpose of GEAR UP is to create college opportunities for at-risk youth. In 1998, GEAR UP began to fund partnerships of high-poverty middle schools, colleges and universities, community organizations, and business to work with identified cohorts of students beginning in the 7th grade through high school graduation. In its first year, GEAR UP served about 450,000 students nationwide. In its second academic year, GEAR UP served over 750,000 students nationwide. A list of national GEAR UP objectives is provided below.

GOAL: To ensure that disadvantaged middle school and secondary school students are prepared for, pursue, and succeed in post secondary education.

Objective 1: Increase the academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education of participating students.

Indicator 1.1, Completion of academically challenging curricula: Program participants will successfully complete college preparatory course such as algebra, geometry, chemistry, and physics at increasing rates.

Objective 2: Increase the rate of high school graduation and participation in postsecondary education of participating students.

Indicator 2.1, Attendance, high school completion, and post secondary enrollment: Program participants will have high rates of attendance in school, be promoted to the next grade level on time, and successfully complete high school and enroll in postsecondary education programs at increasing rates.

Objective 3: Increase educational expectations for participating students and student and family knowledge of postsecondary options, preparation, and financing.

Indicator 3.1, Student, family, and teacher expectations: participating students, their families, and their teachers will have high educational expectations, which are sustained throughout the life of the program.

GEAR UP Coordinates with Other Federal Activities by

- Supplementing HUD efforts to provide educational support for children living in public housing
- Encouraging a relationship between the U.S. Department of Education and Health and Human Services (HHS)
- Linking partnership and state grantees to regional programmatic initiatives in order to obtain assistance in areas of assessment and accountability, curriculum, instruction, technology, and urban education
- Enhancing efforts of state programs and initiatives

For more information refer to the GEAR UP homepage:
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/gearup/index.html

APPENDIX B: GEAR UP STUDENT COHORT SUMMARY, DECEMBER 2000

CAMPUS	STUDENT POPULATION			ETHNICITY					ECO DISADVN	LEP
	ALL	M	F	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	AFRICAN AMERICAN	HISPANIC	WHITE		
Fulmore MS	268 (100%)	132 (49%)	136 (51%)	2 (<1%)	3 (<1%)	25 (9%)	197 (74%)	41 (15%)	174 (65%)	45 (17%)
Kealing JH	559 (100%)	277 (50%)	282 (50%)	0 (0%)	36 (6%)	158 (29%)	178 (32%)	187 (33%)	232 (42%)	24 (4%)
Burnet MS	389 (100%)	217 (56%)	172 (44%)	0 (0%)	10 (2%)	73 (19%)	217 (56%)	89 (23%)	231 (59%)	104 (27%)
Pearce MS	277 (100%)	151 (55%)	126 (45%)	1 (<1%)	0 (0%)	140 (51%)	128 (46%)	8 (2%)	215 (78%)	59 (21%)
Porter MS	262 (100%)	147 (56%)	115 (44%)	1 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	19 (7%)	178 (68%)	63 (24%)	161 (61%)	42 (2%)
Martin JH	351 (100%)	168 (48%)	183 (52%)	2 (<1%)	0 (0%)	33 (9%)	287 (82%)	29 (8%)	264 (75%)	65 (19%)
Webb MS	273 (100%)	147 (54%)	126 (46%)	0 (0%)	2 (1%)	40 (15%)	207 (76%)	24 (8%)	209 (77%)	130 (48%)
Dobie MS	342 (100%)	181 (53%)	161 (47%)	1 (<1%)	12 (3%)	141 (41%)	165 (48%)	23 (7%)	229 (67%)	79 (23%)
Mendez MS	307 (100%)	149 (49%)	158 (51%)	0 (0%)	1 (<1%)	40 (13%)	256 (83%)	10 (3%)	266 (87%)	73 (24%)
Paredes MS	313 (100%)	159 (51%)	154 (49%)	0 (0%)	7 (2%)	33 (11%)	187 (60%)	86 (27%)	145 (46%)	36 (12%)
Texas Empowerment Academy	28 (100%)	17 (61%)	11 (39%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	17 (61%)	9 (32%)	2 (7%)	21 (75%)	0 (0%)
TOTAL	**3,369** (100%)	**1745** (52%)	**1624** (48%)	**7** (0%)	**72** (2%)	**719** (21%)	**2009** (60%)	**562** (17%)	**2126** (64%)	**657** (20%)

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APPENDIX C: GEAR UP STUDENT SURVEY SUMMARY, 2000-2001

School and School Work

How many hours do you spend on homework each week? N=2448	Frequency	Percent
None	202	8.3
Less than one	945	38.6
Two or three	888	36.3
Four or five	267	10.9
Six or more	146	6.

My teacher helps me with my homework. N=2425	Frequency	Percent
Always	190	7.8
Most of the time	412	17
Sometimes	1387	57.2
Never	436	18

A GEAR UP tutor helps me with my homework. N=2423	Frequency	Percent
Always	112	4.6
Most of the time	168	6.9
Sometimes	352	14.5
Never	1791	73.9

My parent or guardian helps me with my homework. N=2439	Frequency	Percent
Always	410	16.8
Most of the time	495	20.3
Sometimes	1172	48.1
Never	362	14.8

My brother or sister helps me with my homework. N=2440	Frequency	Percent
Always	110	4.5
Most of the time	214	8.8
Sometimes	785	32.2
Never	1331	54.5

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A friend helps me with my homework. N=2444	Frequency	Percent
Always	99	4.1
Most of the time	301	12.3
Sometimes	1346	55.1
Never	698	28.6

I do my homework with little help or by myself. N=2436	Frequency	Percent
Always	674	27.7
Most of the time	897	36.8
Sometimes	750	30.8
Never	115	4.7

I like school. N=2437	Frequency	Percent
Always	402	16.5
Most of the time	799	32.8
Sometimes	963	39.5
Never	273	11.2

I am a good student. N=2441	Frequency	Percent
Always	584	23.9
Most of the time	1080	44.2
Sometimes	717	29.4
Never	60	2.5

I set goals for my future. N=2430	Frequency	Percent
Always	860	35.4
Most of the time	629	25.9
Sometimes	764	31.4
Never	177	7.3

I have the ability to do well in school. N=2434	Frequency	Percent
Always	1099	45.2
Most of the time	889	36.5
Sometimes	407	16.7
Never	39	1.6

I work very hard on my assignments. N=2442	Frequency	Percent
Always	706	28.9
Most of the time	1059	43.4
Sometimes	633	25.9
Never	44	1.8

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I participate in classroom activities. N=2440	Frequency	Percent
Always	866	35.5
Most of the time	877	35.9
Sometimes	631	25.9
Never	66	2.7

I participate in extra-curricular activities. N=2429	Frequency	Percent
Always	406	16.7
Most of the time	561	23.1
Sometimes	1013	41.7
Never	449	18.5

I will graduate from high school. N=2423	Frequency	Percent
Yes, I will graduate.	1953	80.6
No, I will not graduate.	58	2.4
I am not sure.	413	17

A good education is important to me. N=2412	Frequency	Percent
Yes, it is very important.	2006	83.2
It is somewhat important.	246	10.2
No, it is not important at all.	68	2.8
I am not sure if it is important to me.	92	3.8

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Does your school offer Advanced Placement courses? N=2400	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1168	48.7
No	135	5.6
I do not know.	1097	45.7

Do you know which courses you should take to prepare for college? N=2418	Frequency	Percent
Yes	981	40.6
No	607	25.1
I do not know.	830	34.1

Do you know about different types of colleges? N=2398	Frequency	Percent
Yes, I know a lot about them.	460	19.2
No, I do not know anything about them.	582	24.3
I know a few things about them.	1356	56.5

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Do you know the costs of attending different types of colleges? N=2341	Frequency	Percent
Yes, I know a lot about it.	331	14.1
No, I do not know anything about it.	964	41.2
I know a few things about it.	1046	44.7

How much is the average cost of tuition and fees at a four-year public college for one year? N=2226	Frequency	Percent
$500 or less	208	9.3
$1,000	320	14.4
$1,500	238	10.7
$2,000	236	10.6
$2,500	248	11.1
$3,000	268	12
$5,000 or more	708	31.8

Do you know about Pell grants? N=2347	Frequency	Percent
Yes, I know a lot about it.	119	5.1
No, I do not know anything about it.	1854	79
I know a few things about it.	374	15.9

Do you know about federal work-study college programs? N=2382	Frequency	Percent
Yes, I know a lot about it.	162	6.8
No, I do not know anything about it.	1652	69.4
I know a few things about it.	568	23.8

Do you know how to get financial aid for college? N=2387	Frequency	Percent
Yes, I know a lot about it.	294	12.3
No, I do not know anything about it.	1421	59.5
I know a few things about it.	672	28.2

My parents or guardians have helped me learn about continuing my education after high school. N=2360	Frequency	Percent
Yes, they have helped a lot.	1230	52.1
No, they have not helped me at all.	350	14.8
They have helped me a little.	780	33

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Adults from the GEAR UP program have helped me learn about continuing my education after high school. N=2315	Frequency	Percent
Yes, they have helped a lot.	853	36.8
No, they have not helped me at all.	774	33.4
They have helped me a little.	688	29.7

How far in school do you think you will go after high school? N=2381	Frequency	Percent
Certificate program	129	5.4
Associates Degree	252	10.6
Bachelors Degree	513	21.5
Graduate or Professional Degree	689	28.9
Do not know	714	30
I do not plan to continue my education.	84	3.5

What is the main reason you would not continue your education after high school? N=2196	Frequency	Percent
It costs too much.	786	35.8
I need or want to go to work.	286	13
My grades are not good enough.	454	20.7
I want to join the military service.	176	8
I want to start a family, or I need to take care of my family.	153	7
The job/career that I am interested in will provide training for me.	197	9
I am just not interested.	144	6.6

I will be able to pay for four years of college. N=2357	Frequency	Percent
Yes, definitely.	550	23.3
No, definitely not.	289	12.3
I am not sure.	1518	64.4

I will get financial aid for college. N=2346	Frequency	Percent
Yes, definitely.	496	21.1
No, definitely not.	205	8.7
I am not sure.	1645	70.1

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The 21st Century Certificate has helped me change my plans about attending college. N=2317	Frequency	Percent
Yes, definitely.	556	24
No, definitely not.	415	17.9
I am not sure.	1346	58.1

MY FAMILY

My family is happy when I do well in school. N=2365	Frequency	Percent
Always	1798	76
Most of the time	301	12.7
Sometimes	219	9.3
Never	47	2

My family comes to school events when I am involved. N=2350	Frequency	Percent
Always	615	26.2
Most of the time	646	27.5
Sometimes	778	33.1
Never	311	13.2

What is the main reason your family might not attend school events in which you are involved? N=2293	Frequency	Percent
They do not know when events are held.	224	9.8
They have to work.	1291	56.3
They have to care for my siblings.	297	13
They are not interested.	115	5
I do not know.	366	16

My family wants me to go to college. N=2361	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1943	82.3
No	78	3.3
It does not matter to them.	137	5.8
I do not know.	203	8.6

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I receive tutoring in math. N=2309	Frequency	Percent
Frequently	218	9.4
Occasionally	237	10.3
A few times	694	30.1
Never	1160	50.2

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I receive tutoring in reading. N=2307	Frequency	Percent
Frequently	153	6.6
Occasionally	174	7.5
A few times	500	21.7
Never	1480	64.2

I receive tutoring in other subjects. N=2304	Frequency	Percent
Frequently	171	7.4
Occasionally	251	10.9
A few times	609	26.4
Never	1273	55.3

I receive tutoring for SAT, ACT, or other college exams. N=2279	Frequency	Percent
Frequently	117	5.1
Occasionally	135	5.9
A few times	312	13.7
Never	1715	75.3

I use a computer lab to complete my assignments and/or learn more about careers or college. N=2297	Frequency	Percent
Frequently	250	10.9
Occasionally	271	11.8
A few times	721	31.4
Never	1055	45.9

I have visited a college. N=2284	Frequency	Percent
Frequently	313	13.7
Occasionally	265	11.6
A few times	841	36.8
Never	865	37.9

I have participated in career exploration activities. N=2279	Frequency	Percent
Frequently	209	9.2
Occasionally	250	11
A few times	764	33.5
Never	1056	46.3

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I have participated in job shadowing activities. N=2276	Frequency	Percent
Frequently	7.7	176
Occasionally	8.9	378
A few times	25.6	960
Never	57.8	2276

I have participated in GEAR UP activities with my family. N=2261	Frequency	Percent
Frequently	172	7.6
Occasionally	181	8
A few times	440	19.5
Never	1468	64.9

My participation in GEAR UP has helped me improve my academic performance. N=2237	Frequency	Percent
It has helped me a lot.	456	20.4
It has not helped me at all.	917	41
It has helped me a little.	108	4.8
I do not know.	756	33.8

My participation in GEAR UP has changed my plans about attending college. N=2141	Frequency	Percent
Yes	673	31.4
No	710	33.2
I do not know.	758	35.4

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APPENDIX D: GEAR UP PARENT SURVEY RESULTS, 2001-2001

YOUR CHILD

How many hours does your child spend on homework each week? N=1050	Frequency	Percent
None	53	5
Less than one	205	19.5
Two or three	430	41
Four or five	228	21.7
Six or more	134	12.8

Who helps your child the most with homework assignments? N=1038	Frequency	Percent
Myself	393	37.9
Another family member	192	18.5
A classroom teacher	92	8.9
A GEAR UP mentor/tutor	16	1.5
My child's classmate or friend	32	3.1
My child completes homework assignments without help	313	30.2

My child likes school. N=1047	Frequency	Percent
Always	435	41..5
Most of the time	422	40.3
Sometimes	175	16.7
Never	15	1.4

My child is a good student. N=1054	Frequency	Percent
Always	418	39.7
Most of the time	482	45.7
Sometimes	149	14.1
Never	5	.5

My child sets goals for his/her future. N=1056	Frequency	Percent
Always	354	33.5
Most of the time	379	35.9
Sometimes	291	27.6
Never	32	3

My child has the ability to do well in school. N=1055	Frequency	Percent
Always	603	57.2
Most of the time	327	31
Sometimes	124	11.8
Never	1	.1

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My child works very hard on assignments. N=1056	Frequency	Percent
Always	365	34.6
Most of the time	446	42.2
Sometimes	241	22.8
Never	4	.4

My child participates in classroom activities. N=1058	Frequency	Percent
Always	422	39.9
Most of the time	431	40.7
Sometimes	196	18.5
Never	9	.9

My child participates in extra-curricular activities. N=1045	Frequency	Percent
Always	257	24.6
Most of the time	317	30.3
Sometimes	367	35.1
Never	104	10

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

What levee of schooling do you expect your child to complete? N=1040	Frequency	Percent
Certificate program	87	8.4
Associates Degree	130	12.5
Bachelors Degree	425	40.9
Graduate or Professional Degree	322	31
High school	76	7.3

What is the main reason your child would not continue their education after high school? N=1003	Frequency	Percent
Not applicable, my child will continue school	392	39.1
Cost of education	416	41.5
Desire to work	65	6.5
Poor grades	47	4.7
Expect to get on the job training	39	3.9
Family issues	14	1.4
Not interested	30	3

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I have talked with my child about attending college. N=1059	Frequency	Percent
Frequently	583	55.1
Occasionally	241	22.8
A few times	188	17.8
Never	47	4.4

Do you think your child will be able to attend college? N=1038	Frequency	Percent
Yes, definitely.	364	35.1
Maybe	385	37.1
No, definitely not.	98	9.4
I do not know.	191	18.4

I have enough information about my child's preparation for college? N=1051	Frequency	Percent
Yes, I have all of the information I need.	54	5.1
I have some information, but I would like to learn more.	372	35.4
No, I do not have enough information.	625	59.5

How much is the average cost of tuition and fees at a four-year public college for one year? N=899	Frequency	Percent
$500 or less	53	5.9
$1,000	43	4.8
$1,500	59	6.6
$2,000	51	5.7
$2,500	53	5.9
$3,000	195	21.7
$5,000 or more	445	49.5

Do you know how to get financial aid for college? N=1045	Frequency	Percent
Yes, I know a lot about it.	153	14.6
No, I do not know anything about it.	462	44.2
I know a few things about it.	430	41.1

I have talked with someone about the availability of financial assistance. N=1042	Frequency	Percent
Frequently	63	6
Occasionally	185	17.8
A few times	270	25.9
Never	524	50.3

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Do you know about Pell grants? N=1053	Frequency	Percent
Yes, I know a lot about it.	145	13.8
No, I do not know anything about it.	618	58.7
I know a few things about it.	290	27.5

Do you know about federal work-study college programs? N=1035	Frequency	Percent
Yes, I know a lot about it.	89	8.6
No, I do not know anything about it.	658	63.6
I know a few things about it.	288	27.8

My child will be able to pay for four years of college. N=1036	Frequency	Percent
Yes, definitely.	435	42
No, definitely not.	108	10.4
I am not sure.	493	47.6

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

I am happy when my child does well in school. N=1055	Frequency	Percent
Always	924	87.6
Most of the time	82	7.8
Sometimes	45	4.3
Never	4	.4

I come to school events when my child is involved. N=1050	Frequency	Percent
Always	428	40.8
Most of the time	327	31.1
Sometimes	233	22.2
Never	62	5.9

What is the main reason you might not attend school events in which your child is involved? N=1001	Frequency	Percent
I do not know when events are held.	162	16.2
I have to work.	564	56.3
I have to care for my other children.	126	12.6
I am not interested.	8	.8
Other	141	14.1

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I attend parent/teacher conferences. N=1042	Frequency	Percent
Always	469	45
Most of the time	285	27.4
Sometimes	211	20.2
Never	77	7.4

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My child participates in GEAR UP program activities. N=957	Frequency	Percent
Frequently	172	18
Occasionally	152	15.9
A few times	217	22.5
Never	418	43.7

I have attended GEAR UP events. N=1006	Frequency	Percent
Frequently	90	8.9
Occasionally	77	7.7
A few times	150	14.9
Never	689	68.5

I expect participation in GEAR UP to help my child improve his/her academic performance. N=1013	Frequency	Percent
Yes, it will help a lot.	684	67.5
No, it will not help at all.	133	13.1
It will help a little.	22	2.2
I do not know.	174	17.2

The 21st Century Certificate has changed my child's plans to attend college. N=1004	Frequency	Percent
Yes	377	37.5
No	181	18
I do not know.	446	44.4

I would like to attend workshops to help me learn effective parenting skills. N=1027	Frequency	Percent
Yes	629	61.2
No	209	20.4
I do not know.	189	18.4

I would like to attend workshops providing college financial aid information. N=1033	Frequency	Percent
Yes	804	77.8
No	75	7.3
I do not know.	154	14.9

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I would like to attend workshops to learn more about college and career opportunities for my child. N=1035	Frequency	Percent
Yes	833	80.5
No	73	7.5
I do not know.	129	12.5

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APPENDIX E: MENTOR/TUTOR INTERVIEW QUESTION FRAMEWORK

Context

1. Tell me about your academic background and/or interests.

Service Implementation

2. Tell me about the GEAR UP recruitment and hiring process.
3. Tell me about the students that you serve.
4. Tell me about the structure for your tutoring. Is it one-on-one? Small group? Team teaching?
5. What challenges do you face as you tutor?
6. How can the project management support you as you tutor students?
7. Would you recommend participating in this tutoring experience to others? Why or why not?

Student Outcomes

8. Have you seen any specific student outcomes as a result of the tutoring sessions?
9. What suggestions would you have for improving the tutoring experience for the GEAR UP students?

APPENDIX F: PROJECT FACILITATOR INTERVIEW QUESTION FRAMEWORK

Context

1. Tell me about your campus and the students you serve.

Project Implementation

2. Tell me about the GEAR UP training you have received.
3. Tell me about the GEAR UP activities that you have implemented on your campus.
4. What challenges do you face as a GEAR UP facilitator?
5. What suggestions would you have for improving GEAR UP?
6. How can the project management continue to support you?

Participant Outcomes

7. (For each project component) How are students, parents, campus staff, and partners involved in GEAR UP?
8. (For each project component) What are the major contributions/benefits of GEAR UP for your students? Their families? Teachers? Community?
9. Have you seen any specific student/parent/teacher outcomes as a result of GEAR UP?

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APPENDIX G: LEARNING SYSTEMS TRAINING EVALUATION, SUMMER 2001

Introduction

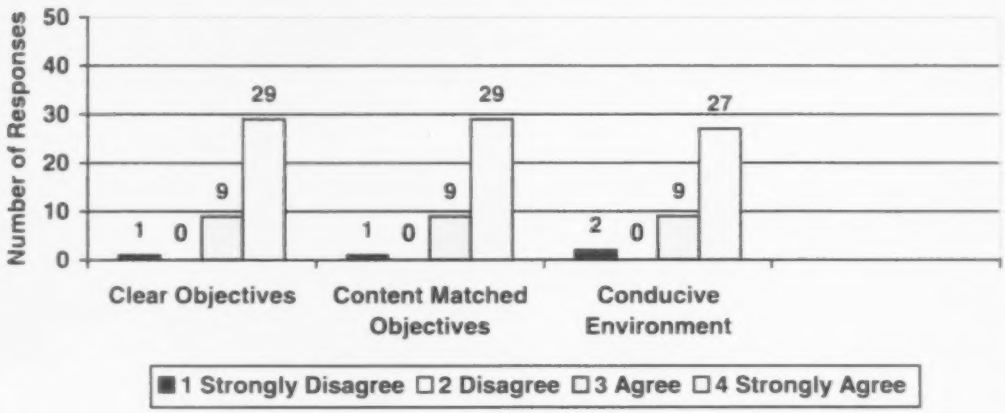
On May 31st and June 1st, 2001, Learning Systems consultants conducted a two-day training course for teachers teaching a summer SAT Preparation mini-camp for GEAR UP students. The two-day training focused PSAT/SAT format and scoring, strategies for analyzing test items, and suggestions for implementing the course.

At the end of this training, all participants were asked to assess their training experience based on a series of statements to which they would indicate their agreement or disagreement. Thirty-nine of forty-two participants chose to complete the survey. Participants were asked to rate the content and instruction, the instructors, and the applicability of the content on a four point Likert-type scale: Stongly Agree =4, Agree =3, Disagree= 2, and Strongly Disagree=1. The results of the evaluation survey are shown in the following figures. Participants will also attend a de-briefing session in August to discuss their training and mini-camp experiences.

Results and Discussion

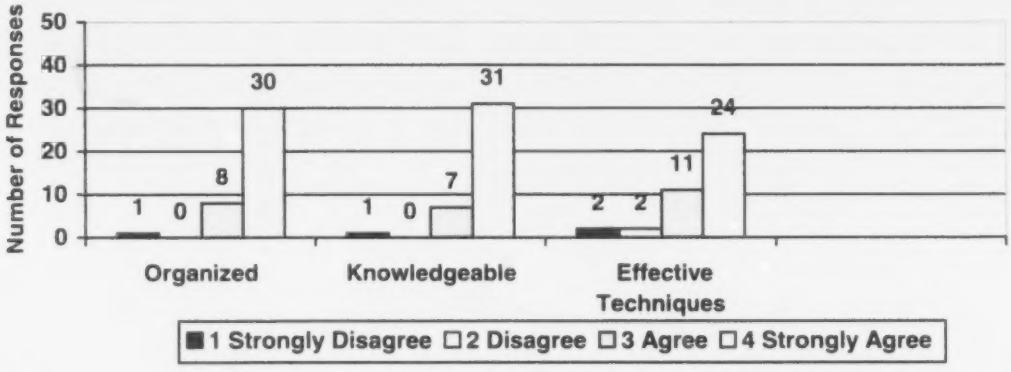
There were three statements on the evaluation form that addressed the content and instruction of the course. The mean for Item 1 was 3.7 with 97% of the respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the course communicated clear learning objectives. The mean for Item 2 on the survey was also 3.7 with 97% of the respondents agreeing and strongly agreeing that the course content was aligned with the course objectives. Finally, 92% agreed or strongly agreed that the course was taught in an environment conducive to learning with a mean of 3.6. Figure 1 shows the frequency distribution of their responses.

Figure 1: Content and Instruction



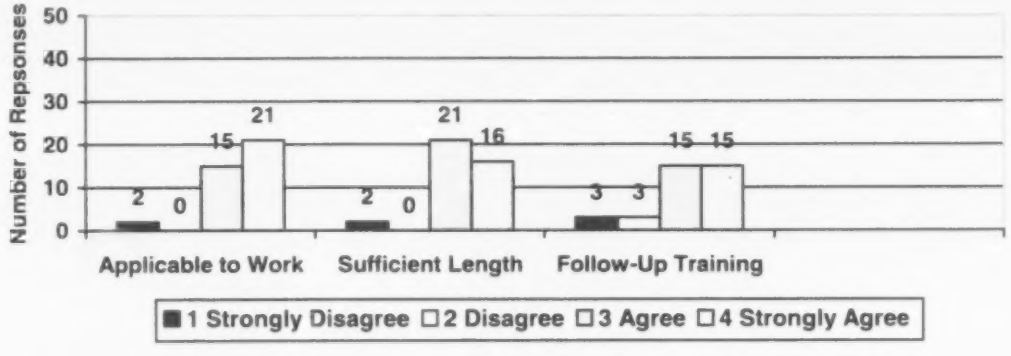
The second section of the evaluation form addressed the effectiveness of the instructors. A mean of 3.7 on Items 4 and 5 shows that 97% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the instructors were organized and knowledgeable about the subject matter. On Item 6, the mean was 3.5 with 90% of the respondents agreeing that effective training techniques were used. A summary of their responses is provided in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Instructor



The last section of the evaluation form addressed the participants' application of the training course content. On Item 7, 92% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the training was applicable to their work with a mean of 3.4. On Item 8, 95% agreed that the session length was sufficient to cover the coursework with a mean of 3.3. Finally, 77% of the respondents agreed that they would like to receive follow-up training support with a mean of 3.2 on item nine. Figure 3 shows the frequency of their responses on each item.

Figure 3: Application



Conclusion

The overall response to the training experience was positive. Most participants agreed that it was appropriate for their needs. Written comments on the evaluation form indicated an interest in reducing the amount of time reading the content provided in the manual and modifying the training to address individual campus concerns. This would include increasing the time to address course implementation strategies and time for sharing ideas. Using this data and subsequent debriefing information, it is recommended that project management continue to offer this training course for other project staff making modifications as appropriate.

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APPENDIX H: LEARNING SYSTEMS STUDENT CAMP EVALUATION SUMMARY, SUMMER 2001

Introduction

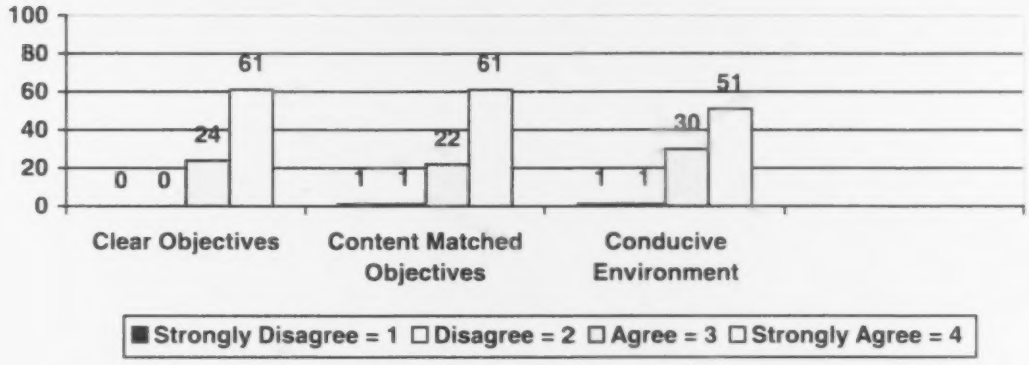
The GEAR UP project trained 42 teachers to conduct a summer SAT/ACT Preparation mini-camp for cohort students. The two-week camps focused PSAT/SAT format and scoring, strategies for analyzing test items, and suggestions for implementing the course. A total of 291 students attended the camps at campuses across the district. During the second two-week session of the camp, 84 of 133 participants completed an evaluation survey. Students were asked to rate the content and instruction, the instructors, and the applicability of the content on a four point Likert-type scale: Stongly Agree =4, Agree =3, Disagree= 2, and Strongly Disagree=1. Students also responded to the following question: Would you attend this camp again? Why or why not?

Results and Discussion

Content and Instruction

There were three statements on the evaluation form that addressed the content and instruction of the course. On item 1, Content Objectives, the mean response was 3.7 with 100% of respondents agreeing/strongly agreeing that they understood the purpose of the camp. The mean for Item 2 was also 3.7 with 98% agreeing/strongly agreeing that the content of the camp was clearly aligned with the camp's learning objectives. Finally, 96% agreed/strongly agreed that the camp maintained an environment conducive to learning with a mean of 3.5. Figure 1 illustrates their responses.

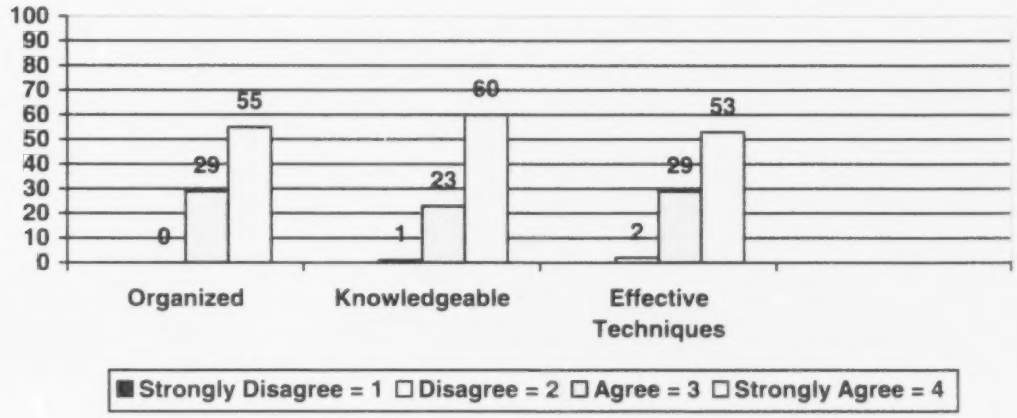
Figure 1: Content and Instruction



The Instructor (s)

The second section of the evaluation form addressed the effectiveness of the instructors. The mean for Item 4 was 3.6 with 100% of the students agreeing/strongly agreeing that camp instructors were prepared for class each day. 99% of students agreed/strongly agreed that their teachers were organized with a mean response of 3.7 on the evaluation. Finally, 97% of the students agreed/strongly agreed that their teachers used effective teaching techniques with a mean response of 3.6. Figure 2 shows the distribution of their responses

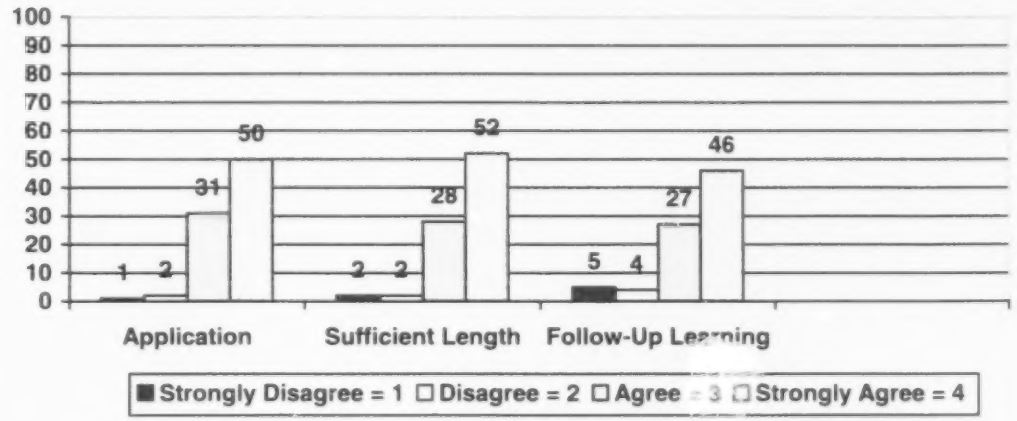
Figure 2: Instructor (s)



Application

The last section of the evaluation form addressed the participants' application of the training course content. On Item 7, 96% of students reported that they agreed/strongly agreed that they will use what they have learned from camp with a mean response of 3.6. On Item 8, 95% of students reported that they had enough time to learn what was expected/required with a mean response of 3.5. On item 9, 87% agreed/strongly agreed that they would return to a similar camp again to learn more with a mean response of 3.3. Figure 3 summarizes the responses.

Figure 3: Application



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Open Ended Question: Would you attend this camp again? Why or why not?

This section of the evaluation was designed to get students to offer constructive feedback in their own words. Of the 84 students that completed the survey:

9 students chose not to answer the question;
7 students said, "Maybe";
5 students said, "No"; and
63 students said, "Yes".

Examples of comments from the students that answered "Maybe":
" Maybe, it was too early to wake-up, and it was kind of boring."
"Maybe, I don't know if I would or not. Probably, yes."
"I am not really sure, because I have lost a lot of sleep and can't work that well."
"No, because I have many other things to do and this takes out of that time. Yes, because I got to meet new people and make new friends. I learned new tactics I didn't know before."
"I am not sure if I would do this again. My parents work and my sister (works), so there is no one to take care of my little brothers."

Examples of comments representing the concerns of those that answered "No":
"No, it was too long. We spent too much time on basic problems."
"No, because I feel I have learned all the strategies I need. Plus, the hours are too long."
"No, I feel that I have learned enough to increase my test scores already."
"No, I am not coming again. I want to stay home and watch T.V."

Examples of comments representing the concerns of those that answered "Yes":

24 stressed the "fun factor".
"Yes, I would do this camp again, because I wouldn't want to be home sitting on my couch watching T.V. or helping my mom cook, clean, whatever. I get to have fun and learn more stuff instead!"
"Yes, it's fun! We get all kinds of stuff and go on field trips."
"Yes, I got to see my friends. It was fun, and any help for the SAT/ACT for free is AWESOME!
"Yes, if there were more teachers like "Mr. X" and "Ms. Y"! They made it really fun!"

13 referenced future planning for high school and college.
"Yes, it helped me decide which college I want to go to."
"Yes, I want to learn more and get a good grade on the SAT so I can get into a good college."
"Yes, even though I hate getting up in the morning, what I learned will help me later on."

9 mentioned "test preparation" concerns.
"Yes, I would love to do this camp again, because I want to be really prepared when taking my SAT test."
"Yes, I could use this in my future. It might help me do better on the SAT."

9 mentioned basic skills development and improved class grades.
"Yes, I will do this camp again because I learned more math problems and more skills to take the tests."
"Yes, I will take this camp again because it helps me more than some of my classes at school."

APPENDIX I: GEAR UP PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

PROJECT GOAL: To increase post secondary education enrollment of low-income underrepresented youth through early intervention in college preparation and awareness and through academic intervention, college and career counseling outreach, and family support services.

OBJECTIVES:

I. Academic Intervention Component

A. 80% of cohort students will pass the reading, writing, and math sections of the TAAS.
B. 100% of failing cohort students will participate weekly in mentoring/tutoring activities.
C. 18% of cohort students are enrolled in advanced courses.
D. 63% of cohort students will complete the SAT or ACT tests.
E. 27% of cohort students score at or above criterion on SAT/ACT tests.
F. 50% of cohort students enroll in postsecondary institutions.

II. Enhanced Guidance and Counseling Service Component

A. 100% of students will complete the Individual Academic Career Plan (IACP); complete an aptitude survey; create a portfolio; attend Centex College Fair; and attend a career exploration day.
B. 100% of cohort students will receive and e-mail address; visit a college internet site; and have a one-on-one e-mail mentor.
C. 100% of cohort students will visit a College and Career Center at least twice per year; complete the PSAT/PLAN; complete the SAT/ACT; and identify two postsecondary institutions for enrollment.
D. 90% of cohort students will complete financial aid applications.

III. Professional Development Component

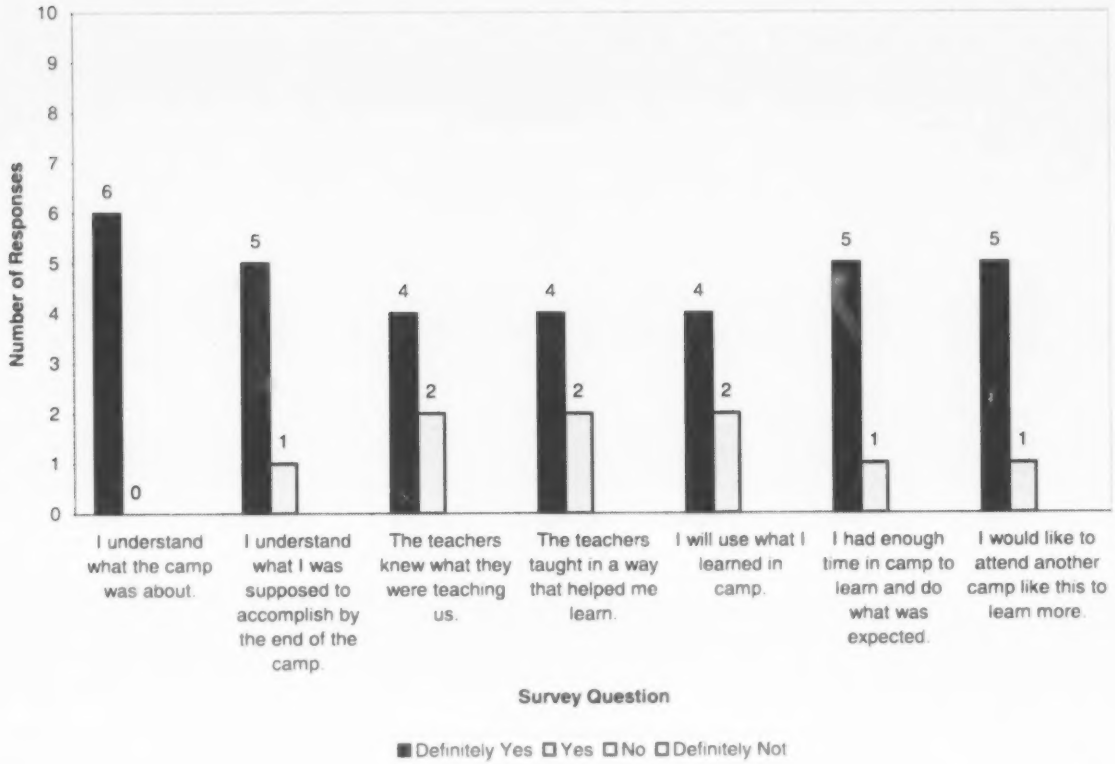
A. 100% of project staff and cohort teachers will complete 20 hours of staff development per year.
B. 80% of project partners will attend an annual GEAR UP conference.
C. 95% of Advisory Council members will annually evaluate the project indicating satisfaction with collaborative and intervention strategies.
D. 100% of project support staff and core team of teachers at each campus will complete IMPACT/GAIT team training.

IV. Parental Involvement Component

A. 100% of cohort parents will receive a GEAR UP brochure and attend a parent orientation.
B. 100% of cohort parents will sign a GEAR UP participation contract.
C. 50% of cohort parents will complete parent training sessions each year.
D. 10 parents will complete the "train the trainer" parental support program annually.
E. 100% of homeless and at-risk students will receive case management support services.

APPENDIX J: GEAR UP TECHNOLOGY CAMP SURVEY RESULTS: SUMMER 2001

The following figure shows the number of student responses for each question on an end-of-course evaluation given at the completion of one session of the GEAR UP Technology camp. Six of ten students chose to complete the evaluation form.



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APPENDIX K: GEAR UP PARENT PARTICIPATION CONTRACT: 2001

Parent Demonstration of Support

As the parent/guardian of _____, a student in the GEAR-UP program at _____, I will responsibly and actively work with teachers and GEAR-UP staff to ensure that my child takes full advantage of the opportunities and educational programs made available to him/her through GEAR-UP grant funding.

To demonstrate my commitment and support of the goals and activities of the GEAR-UP Project I, _____.' agree to:

1. Read the GEAR-UP brochure carefully.
2. Attend GEAR-UP meetings and programs designed especially for parents whenever possible.
3. Encourage my child to take advantage of educational opportunities offered by GEAR-UP.
4. Encourage my child to take part in FREE college events and field trips offered by GEAR-UP.
5. Attend Financial Planning and College Preparation Workshops.
6. Complete a GEAR-UP parent survey so that GEAR-UP staff can get to know you and what is important to you.

When teachers and parents join together
to encourage young people to do their very best in school,
SUCCESS is the only possible result!

I have read the GEAR-UP brochure and understand that my student's class will receive significant benefits as a result of the GEAR-UP grant funding. I understand that it is important for me to work with teachers and GEAR-UP staff to promote the importance of my child's participation in GEAR-UP activities and support services.

_____ (X) on the line if you AGREE to support GEAR-UP.

_____(X) on the line if you understand what GEAR-UP will provide, but choose not to agree to support GEAR-UP.

Parent Signature: _____

Thank you for your support.

APPENDIX L: GEAR UP PROJECT PARTNERS: 2000-2001

Higher Education Partners

1. University of Texas at Austin
2. St. Edward's University
3. Huston Tillotson University
4. Austin Community College
5. Southwest Texas State University

Business and Community Partners

1. Educational Resources Consulting
2. Communities in Schools- Central Texas, Inc.
3. Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce
4. ACT. Inc.
5. Avance
6. Capital Area Training Foundation
7. Southwestern Regional Office of the College Board
8. Career Development Resources (formerly the Texas State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee)
9. Junior Achievement of Central Texas
10. Learning Systems
11. DAAMARS International
12. Girlstart
13. Premier Planners

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